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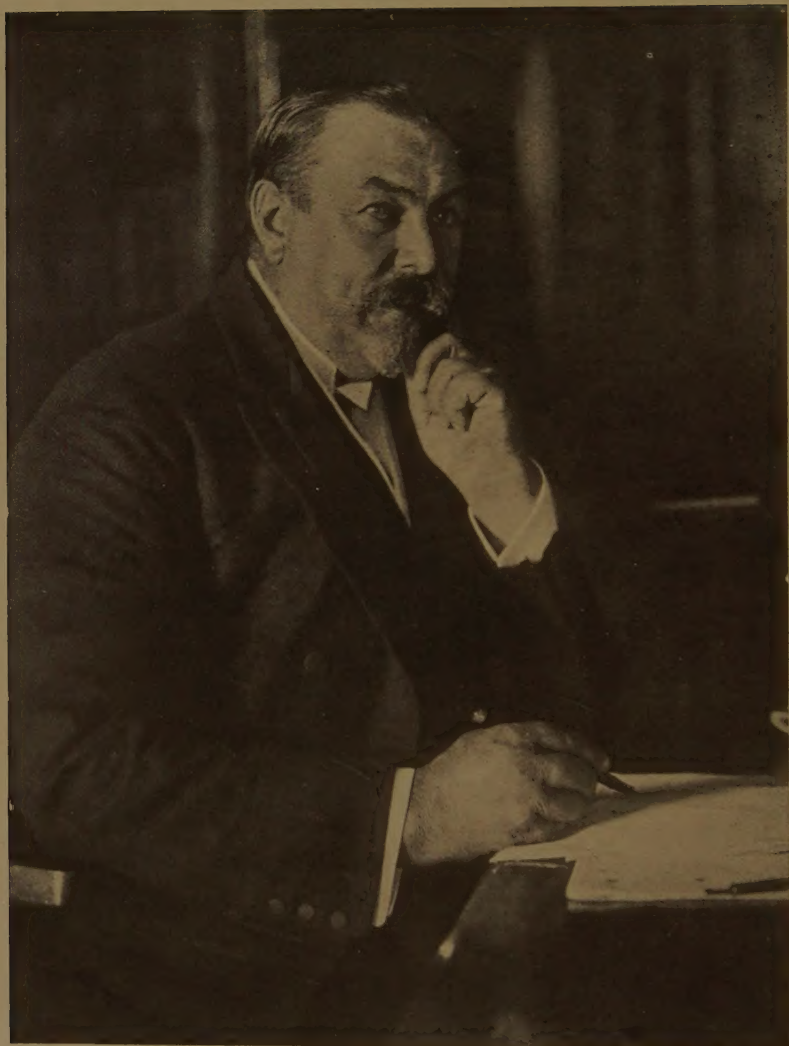
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JOHN MURRAY



Messrs. Levson, Johannesburg.

Miss Botha

JANUARY 1918.

[Frontispiece.]

GENERAL BOTHA

BY
EARL BUXTON



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1924

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TO
MRS. BOTHA

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is in no way a Life of General Botha ; his authorised Biography is in preparation.

I propose to confine myself to an account of the Botha whom I knew, and with whom I had intimate relations from the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 to his death in August 1919, a period which covered five years out of the six that I was serving in South Africa as Governor General of the Union and High Commissioner for South Africa.

At the same time it is advisable to give a short account of General Botha's earlier life leading up to the period in question. For a full appreciation of the man himself, it is clearly necessary also to give some idea of the surroundings amidst which he lived and moved, to indicate the problems which he had to solve, the difficulties he had to meet, and the material with which he had to deal.

It is no easy task to bring back to the minds and memories of those who knew him, the personality of the friend who has gone ; while to attempt to depict him so that he may live to those who knew him not, is a well-nigh impossible undertaking.

The most that can be accomplished is to recount deeds and words, and to combine these with an attempted portrait—necessarily an inadequate portrait—of the man himself.

The intrusion of the personal pronoun will, I hope, be pardoned. But after all, the main reason why I have tried to describe General Botha as he was, has arisen out of the very close relationship which subsisted between the Governor General and his Prime Minister under the strain and stress of the Great War and its aftermath, combined with the intimacy of the two in close personal friendship.

There is one point on which I must touch. The years from 1914 until General Botha's death in 1919, were years of acute and delicate political problems, which in the main still continue. It has been my anxious desire when touching on controversial matters—for they cannot be altogether avoided—to deal with them as far as possible in a non-controversial way. I have therefore necessarily had to walk warily, which has somewhat hampered my freedom.

Even as it is, and even after the greatest care, there is a danger, which I realise, that something I may write may be open to legitimate criticism or illegitimate misrepresentation, and may do the very harm which I have been most anxious to avoid.

It may be advisable to add that, while I was in South Africa, and indeed until a considerable time after I had left, I had not in mind to write any account of Louis Botha—until his death it never indeed occurred to me that I should survive him. I did not therefore write or keep any letters, or make any notes or memoranda with that purpose in view.

But during the period in question, partly for my own benefit and partly for the information of the Secretary of State, I kept very full records of all

that was going on in the Union, as well as noted any important conversations I had with General Botha or others. These I have freely utilised.

It appeared to me only of late that I was in a peculiarly favourable position to give an account of a great man and an outstanding personality.

I should perhaps add that I am solely responsible for anything that appears in this book ; and no one in South Africa has been consulted by me in regard to any statement given or opinion expressed. The only exception is that, for the sake of accuracy, I applied to the Defence Department of the Union for the totals of those engaged in the various Campaigns, the casualties, etc., and these the Department were good enough to supply.

I am very much indebted to Mr. Percy Horsfall, (at one time my Secretary in South Africa) for giving me the advantage of his assistance throughout—for censoring the manuscript and for reading the proofs. His help has been invaluable. My daughter, and one or two friends here have been kind enough also to help me.

It was at my wife's suggestion that the book was begun, and much of such value or interest as it may possess, is due to her encouragement, help and contributions.

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GENERAL BOTHA

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL

I

I HAD the privilege of meeting General Botha and knowing him fairly well during his visit to England in 1907, and again in 1911; but I naturally had no intimate knowledge of his personality nor of his policy before I went out to South Africa as Governor General just when war broke out.

The last five years of his life from 1914 to 1919, which were covered by my period of office, constituted, however, the period during which he had to make perhaps the most prompt, certainly the most momentous decisions of his career; when War was declared, when the question of an Expedition against German South West arose, and when the Rebellion broke out.

On these, and on the many difficult, delicate, and disturbing problems that confronted him on the outbreak, or arising out of the war, he saw at once and clearly where, in his opinion, the path of honour and of duty led, and followed it without hesitation. And, apart from these great problems, the four years of war, and the nine months of peace before

his death, were one long series of anxieties and troubles, which he met with courage and resource.

It will be well, however, before dealing with this latter period of his life, to give a brief Biographical sketch of his previous career.

Louis Botha was born in 1862 at Greytown, in the colony of Natal, at that time a border town on the outskirts of civilization. He was one of six brothers and seven sisters—the eighth child. His father, who was of Huguenot ancestry from Lorraine, was a sheep-farmer on a considerable scale. About 1867 the family migrated to the district of Harrismith, in the north-east of the Orange Free State, and settled down at Vrede, then also in the wilds.

Louis was brought up as a farmer himself; and in his early days, from 1881 to 1884, he annually trekked with the sheep into Zululand for the winter, for the sake of the grazing, in those days a necessity for a high-veld farmer of the Free State.

In 1883 his father died, and soon after Louis joined Lukas Meyer, at that time Land-drost of Utrecht in the Transvaal, in an expedition into Zululand to secure to Dinizulu the succession to his father Cetewayo against his rival Usibepu. Dinizulu had promised the Boers who assisted him that, if successful, he would hand over to them the free possession of that part of Zululand which bordered on Natal down to, and including, St. Lucia Bay. Dinizulu was successful, and his allies received their reward; and, in 1884, established the so-called "New Republic," the capital of which was the recently laid-out town of Vryheid, and Lukas Meyer became the first President.

The British Government, however, refused the little Republic access to the sea, and after a brief and precarious existence, it was, in 1888, with the consent of the British Government, absorbed into the South African Republic (the Transvaal), and Louis Botha, born a British subject, became a citizen of the Transvaal.¹

In 1886, when twenty-four years old, he married Annie, the eldest daughter of Mr. John Cheere Emmet, and they settled down as pioneers near Vryheid; and in spite of many difficulties Botha soon became a prosperous farmer.

For some years he held the position of Field Cornet and Collector of Taxes in an outlying part of the district; and, in 1895, somewhat against his will, he accepted the post of Resident Justice and Native Commissioner for Swaziland. The control of that country had recently been handed over to the South African Republic by the British Government. For a short time Botha lived at M'babane; he soon however returned to Vryheid and to his farm and became a Native Commissioner as well as a Field Cornet.

Botha developed a considerable interest, and took an active part in local politics—all South Africans, Boer and British, women and men, are born politicians. In 1893 he warmly supported the candidature of General Piet Joubert of Majuba Hill fame, who stood for progress and reform in the Transvaal against President Paul Kruger. The latter was, however, re-elected President, though it was popularly believed at the time that Joubert

¹ It may be noted, as a matter of interest, that both Botha and Smuts were born British subjects, the former in Natal, the latter in the Cape Colony.

actually obtained a majority of the votes. If Joubert had displaced Kruger, the whole course of South African history would have been changed.

In 1897 Botha was elected a Member of the Volksraad for the district of Vryheid; his old friend Lukas Meyer being his colleague. His election to the Volksraad took him to Pretoria for part of the year, and brought him into active politics.

In the Volksraad he energetically supported General Joubert and Lukas Meyer in their opposition to the somewhat reactionary policy of President Kruger, especially in regard to concessions and monopolies; and advocated the policy of fair treatment for the Uitlanders and co-operation between the two white races. The Jameson Raid of December 1895 had, however, altered the whole political position, and had materially strengthened the forces of stubborn resistance to claims and grievances, and proportionately weakened the party of progress.

The breach between the British Government and its High Commissioner on the one side, and President Kruger and the South African Republic on the other, ever widened; the differences between them became more and more impossible of accommodation, and the two Countries gradually drifted into war. When, in October 1899, the President desired to bring matters to a head by the issue of an Ultimatum, Lukas Meyer (then Chairman of the first Volksraad) and de la Rey, supported by Botha and others, strongly opposed Kruger's action and voted against the dispatch of the fateful Ultimatum.

At General de la Rey's funeral in September 1914, Botha, in his speech at the grave, after recalling his intimate friendship with de la Rey and all the General had done for his country, said he would

tell those present what had never been known before, that "at the second Council which was held as to whether the Transvaal and the Free State should go to war, de la Rey had taken up a strong attitude against it on the ground that war would be folly, and that they were bound to be beaten; that at all events they ought to wait some years longer to make their preparations more complete before they entered into war. When, however, it was decided by a majority against him, he was absolutely loyal, and was one of those who did their best to carry on the war successfully."

II

When war broke out Botha, like de la Rey, did not hesitate for a moment. He joined the Vryheid Commando under Lukas Meyer, and was attached to his Staff. He made his mark in the early engagements on the borders of the Transvaal and Natal, which led to the investment of Ladysmith; and, a little later, on General Meyer's laying down his command on account of ill-health, Botha was appointed as Commandant of the commando of which he was a member by the unanimous voice of his comrades. In November, when General Joubert was disabled, Botha was placed in command of the main Southern Force which held the line of the Tugela against Buller's advance to the relief of Ladysmith. On December 15th, 1899, he fought and won the battle of Colenso, and a month later he snatched victory out of initial reverse at Spion Kop.

After Joubert's death in March 1900 he was confirmed—when only thirty-eight years of age

—in the position of Commandant-General (Commander-in-Chief); and from that time forth he conducted the main operations of the campaign.

A dark period ensued; one disaster after another rapidly followed. By the end of February Kimberley had been relieved and Cronje had been forced to surrender with over four thousand men. On the first of March Ladysmith was relieved, and by the middle of March Bloemfontein was occupied by Lord Roberts. Mafeking was relieved on May 15th, Johannesburg was entered on the last day of May, and Pretoria was occupied early in June.

As a set-off to these disasters the Boers brought off a certain number of brilliant and successful engagements. But after June the war became a sort of guerilla warfare extending over the vast plains of South Africa—mobility against numbers, local knowledge of the countryside against disciplined forces. Botha and de la Rey operated in the Transvaal, de Wet in the Free State, and Smuts mainly in the Cape Province.

In February 1901 Botha, as Commandant-General, met Lord Kitchener at Middleburg, a meeting that very nearly resulted in an agreement, on terms which, in all essentials, formed the basis of the Peace of Vereeniging a year later. The negotiations however failed, but through no fault of the negotiators themselves.

During the two long-drawn-out years, from March 1900 to March 1902, a period of terrible difficulty and suffering to the Burgher forces and to the people, Botha proved himself to be as great a leader in adversity and defeat as he had shown himself to be when success had favoured his arms.

Time was on the side of the superior forces. Attrition took place amongst the burghers, the numbers in the field ever dwindled and there were none to take their place. Food supplies became more difficult to obtain, horses continuously diminished in numbers, ammunition failed, the area of operations became ever more restricted, and the respective commanders found it increasingly hard to keep in touch with one another. The moment arrived when the only alternative appeared to be extermination or unconditional surrender.

Early in 1902, through the good offices of the Netherlands Government, negotiations were reopened. After some preliminary correspondence between Lord Kitchener on the one side and President Steyn of the Free State and Schalk Burger, the Acting-President¹ of the South African Republic, on the other, the representatives of the two Republics met in conference at Klerksdorp on April 7th.² They decided to request Lord Kitchener to meet them in order that they might lay certain proposals before him.

The meeting took place at Pretoria on April 12th. President Steyn on behalf of the delegates, expressed an earnest desire for peace, but pressed strongly the claim for the retention of the Independence of the two Republics. His Majesty's Government stated that they were unable to entertain any proposals which were based on the continued Indepen-

¹ President Kruger was in Europe on a Mission to some of the European Powers.

² The best account of the Vereeniging negotiations, etc., is given in that interesting book *The Peace Negotiations between Boer and Briton in South Africa*, by Rev. J. D. Kestell and Mr. D. Van Velden. See also Mr. Harold Spender's *General Botha: the Career and the Man*, Chapter VII.

dence of the former Republics, which had been formally annexed to the British Crown. At a further meeting on the following day with Lord Kitchener, Lord Milner being also present, the representatives of the two Republican Governments stated that constitutionally they had no power to discuss terms based on the surrender of Independence, and it was agreed that the burghers must be consulted and their views ascertained.

It was therefore arranged that thirty delegates from each of the two States, should be elected by the burghers and commandos, who should meet in conference at Vereeniging in order to come to a final conclusion on the matter.

The Conference met on May 15th, 1902. Besides the sixty delegates, there were also present the representatives of the two Governments. These latter included—for the Transvaal, the Acting-President, Schalk Burger, the State Secretary, F. W. Reitz (late President O.F.S.), the Commandant-General, Louis Botha, General de la Rey, and the State Attorney, General Smuts; and for the Orange Free State, President Steyn,¹ Chief Commandant Christian de Wet, and General Hertzog. Not being delegates they had no right to vote, but they took a prominent part in the discussion. General Beyers was elected Chairman.

A prolonged discussion took place at which the military position and the desperate straits of the Republican forces were placed fully before the delegates by the various Commandants.

The Commandant-General had by this time come

¹ President Steyn's health gave way before the end of the proceedings, and General de Wet was appointed Acting-President for Orange Free State.

to the conclusion that the continuation of the war could only result in the destruction of the two Countries and the practical extermination of their people. At the preliminary Conference and at the Vereeniging Conference, supported by General de la Rey and others, he threw his weight on to the side of peace. He stated to those assembled that, while he himself was fully prepared to continue the struggle, it was necessary for the sake of the people to look facts in the face. Outside intervention was an idle hope; day by day their forces in the field were becoming weaker in men, munitions, and supplies; their operations were ever more restricted, and the country was being increasingly devastated. It would be wise, therefore, in his view, while they were still a Nation, to accept terms which would save their future existence.¹ His object, he further stated, was to obtain a peace which would be "a permanent peace under which both Boer and British would be able to dwell here side by side."

One further effort was made by the delegates to retain a remnant of Independence, and a delegation from the Conference again met Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner to urge this upon the Imperial Government. Finally, the Conference yielded to the inevitable with sadness of heart and manly tears, and decided by fifty-four votes to six to relinquish the Independence of the two Republics and to accept the otherwise generous terms of peace offered them by the British Government. The Treaty of Peace embodying these terms was signed in Pretoria on May 31st, 1902.

¹ Schalk Burger put the same argument in a picturesque way. "Fell a tree and it will sprout again, uproot it and there is an end."

The outlook was very black. The conclusion of the war had brought loss of Independence, despair, and ruin, yet the confidence of the burghers in their Commandant-General, both as General and as Man, was unimpaired, and Louis Botha emerged from the war the trusted leader of his people. On the day on which he took leave of his Staff he said to them in prophetic words: "My days of rest are over. I shall only be able to rest when I am put in my grave."

III

The first few years after the Peace of Vereeniging were a difficult and anxious time for Botha and for the other Boer leaders; they and their people were suffering under a deep and bitter sense of national and personal disaster.

Under the terms of the Peace¹ military rule was at once superseded by Crown Colony government. Botha, de la Rey, and Smuts were invited by Lord Milner to join the Legislative Council in order to give him their assistance in the great task of re-settlement and reconstruction in which he was engaged. This invitation they refused on the ground that, as the power and responsibility would still be in British hands, they would not be in a position to ensure an effective voice or influence in the government of their country. It was not possible for them to share responsibility until the time came when full Self-government would be granted.

¹ Clause 7 of the Treaty of Vereeniging was as follows:

"Military Administration in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony will at the earliest possible date be succeeded by Civil Government, and as soon as circumstances permit, Representative Institutions, leading up to Self-government, will be introduced."

They adhered to the same view when, early in 1904, the then British Government announced its intention of introducing in the Transvaal (the Free State was to remain yet awhile under Crown Colony Government) so-called Representative Government—the “Lyttelton Constitution.” They were not prepared to accept any compromise in the matter, as in their view there was no material difference in the matter of responsibility between Crown Colony government and Representative Government; the introduction of the latter would, moreover, be likely, in their opinion, to delay the grant of full Self-government.

It was not until Responsible Government was inaugurated that Botha and his Colleagues were prepared to undertake their share in the government of the Transvaal.

During the five years between the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging and the coming into force of Responsible Government in the Transvaal—May 1902 to February 1907—Botha, though he declined to take a part in the Administration of the country, did not sit with folded hands. He did not despair of the future. He settled down at Pretoria, and his house became a harbour of refuge for his people who were in distress and who required help, encouragement, and sympathy. He revived their broken spirit, and showed the Boer people how they might again play their part in the well-being of their country. Later he became Chairman and chief counsellor of an organization, *Het Volk* (the People), created mainly for the purpose of agitating for Responsible Government.

As the years lengthened and direct British rule continued, the lack of sympathy between the Dutch

population and the British Administration continued.¹ But nevertheless, Botha himself during this period of transition and transformation, did not cease from his desire "to live and to co-operate with the new population." "My most sincere hope (he added) is, that it may please the Omnipotent Father to imbue with unanimity all the white inhabitants of South Africa, so that one Nation may arise from them fit to occupy a position of dignity among the nations of the world, where the name of Boer will be greeted with honour and applause."

In December 1905 came a change of Government in England; and, at an early stage in their career, the new Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, intimated that the Government intended, without delay, to grant Responsible Government to the Transvaal, and subsequently to the Orange Free State.

The new Constitution came into force in the Transvaal in December 1906. The General Election for the first Legislative Assembly which followed in February 1907 gave Botha's party thirty-seven seats out of sixty-nine, with some six "National Party" (British) allied to them, a clear majority over all other parties. General Botha was thereupon called upon to undertake the responsibility of becoming first Prime Minister of the Transvaal, and took Office under the British Crown, with General Smuts

¹ A warm and well-deserved tribute was paid by General Smuts when unveiling, in 1923, a Memorial to the late Sir Richard Solomon, for the way in which, as a member of the Transvaal (Crown Colony) Government, he "not only set himself to the task of rebuilding and reconstruction, but devoted himself specially to his task of fostering new and improved relations, and a better atmosphere between the new Government and the conquered people over whom they had to rule."

as his principal colleague and with a Cabinet taken from his own party or allies.

About half the population of the Transvaal, however, were British (though somewhat divided among themselves politically), and the earlier years of General Botha's Premiership were marked from time to time by political friction and racial feeling. But antagonism and suspicion gradually disappeared under the healing influence of time, of the patriotic spirit animating all, and of the wise and tolerant action of Botha and his Cabinet, coupled with the growing belief, confirmed by his action, that the Prime Minister genuinely and anxiously desired to bring about reconciliation between the two white races. Moreover, coincidentally, the Transvaal prospered exceedingly, and recovered with extraordinary rapidity from the destructive effects of the war.

In 1907 General Botha, as Prime Minister of the Transvaal, came to England in order to attend an Imperial Conference. He had previously been to Europe—his first visit overseas—in August 1902, accompanied by Generals de Wet and de la Rey as delegates from the Vereeniging Conference, with the object of raising funds for the distressed Boers, and to discuss various questions with Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial Office.

IV

The genesis of the Act of Union which exercised a great influence on Botha's career and activities, will be dealt with in the next chapter. It is sufficient to say here that, from the moment that the question of a Conference of the four Colonies to discuss the question of closer union was mooted, about the end of 1906, Botha, though not as yet

Prime Minister of the Transvaal, did not hesitate to declare himself strongly in favour of that policy. Speaking at Standerton in January 1907, he advocated the closer union of the Colonies, and that South Africa should follow in the steps of Australia and Canada. "The old Boers (he said), were the pioneers of the Transvaal, and as they were pioneers in that matter, so they should be on the question of Federation."

From then onwards he threw his weight in favour of the policy which finally resulted in the Act of Union, and took a prominent part in the deliberations of the Convention which met in 1908 to consider the question of the closer union of the four Colonies.

Botha's instinctive breadth of view enabled him to realize that the union of the four Colonies would not only bring about the national and material development of the Country as a whole, and raise the status of South Africa, but that it would also constitute a notable step towards bringing together in co-operation the two white races who had so lately been in arms against one another.

The Act of Union came into force on May 31st, 1910, and the first Governor General, Lord Gladstone, at once entrusted to General Botha the task of forming the first Government of the Union of South Africa.

In certain quarters there was at the time a strong desire that a "Best Man" Government, representative of both the white races, should be formed, and some *pourparlers* took place on the subject between the political leaders. In the end, however, for reasons which seemed good to him, Botha decided to form a Cabinet

drawn from his own party, then known as the "Nationalist Party" (soon after as the "South African Party"), which included a substantial element of those of British descent; and the first Union Cabinet included four of British birth.¹ The elections which subsequently took place gave the Botha Government a large majority.

In 1909 he again visited England as a member of the South African Delegation which came over to advise the Imperial Government in reference to the South African Bill, and to assist the passage of the Act of Union through a sympathetic Imperial Parliament.

In 1911 General Botha came over to England for the fourth time, on this occasion as Prime Minister of the Union, to attend another Imperial Conference.

It does not seem necessary to give here an account of the first four years of Union, to describe the heavy task of bringing the Act into working order, nor to detail incidents that occurred and difficulties that arose during that period; for such as seem relevant to this book are referred to in other chapters.

But one matter of the utmost importance which occurred two years after Union came into being, and which profoundly influenced the whole political and racial position in South Africa, can best be touched on here and now.

It would be contrary to the intention of this book to discuss the causes or the particulars of the antagonism which arose in November 1912 between

¹ See Appendix II.

the Prime Minister and General Hertzog.¹ It arose mainly out of a fundamental difference of view in regard to the relations which ought to subsist between the Union as a Dominion, and the Imperial Government. There was, moreover, a basic difference of opinion as to the policy which in the interests of the country should govern the relations between the two white races. This conflicting view crystallized into the "Two stream" policy advocated by General Hertzog, and defined by the author of the phrase as "two nationalities each flowing in separate channels"; and the "One stream" policy, the merging of the two races into one people, which General Botha had so much at heart.

In the end, General Botha, finding himself unable to accommodate the differences which had arisen between General Hertzog and the rest of the Cabinet, and disapproving of his public utterances as a member of the Cabinet, asked him to resign. This General Hertzog declined to do, whereupon General Botha himself resigned. The Governor General accepted his resignation, but requested him to form a new Cabinet. The Cabinet was reconstructed, but General Hertzog was not asked to join it.

At the third Annual Congress of the South African Party, held in November of 1913, the difference of opinion between General Botha and his section of the South African Party, and General Hertzog and those who thought with him, came to a head. The Motion on which a division finally took place was to the effect that the Botha Government should be asked to resign, and that President Steyn should be

¹ General Hertzog was Minister of Justice in the Botha Cabinet. Before Union he had been Minister of Education in the Orange River Colony Cabinet under Mr. Fischer.

invited to become the Leader of the party outside Parliament, and to nominate a Prime Minister acceptable to both wings of the party. The Motion was lost by 131 to 90, and from that Moment a new Party, designating themselves "Nationalists," came into being.

CHAPTER II

THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

PART I

THE CREATION OF UNION

I

It must undoubtedly be admitted that, partly through her own fault and partly through that of Downing Street, and as often as not through the fault of neither but due to the fatality of circumstances, South Africa has in the past involved Great Britain in more disquiet and anxiety than any other part of the Empire.

In earlier days the Imperial factor was far more potent and obtrusive in South Africa than in Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. The position of affairs in South Africa was peculiar. Two British Colonies, the Cape and Natal, and two Dutch Republics, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, were in existence and next-door neighbours. A sparse white population scattered over a vast and in many parts inaccessible country, surrounded or flanked by warlike Native tribes, led to constant conflicts, to massacres on the one hand and military expeditions on the other.¹ This combina-

¹ Sir Charles Elliot used to say, as regards South and East Africa, that every military Officer on landing ought to be presented with three medals, of one of which he should be deprived for each punitive expedition in which he took part.

tion of States and of Races necessitated a careful watch on the part of the Imperial Government, and brought about perpetual, and often peremptory intervention on their part.

Thus, in those days, and indeed until comparatively recent times, 'Downing Street' in South Africa was to many synonymous with active and constant intervention, sometimes wise and sometimes unwise, in the policy and action of the two Colonies; and (previous to the Boer War) in the affairs of the South African Republic as well.

Friction and misunderstandings were inevitable. The British Government not infrequently showed a want of knowledge or appreciation of local conditions, an absence of a settled or manifest policy, high-handed action or a sudden shrinking from responsibility, which engendered a feeling of irritation and resentment in South Africa (often, however, unreasonable and unjust) against what was considered fussy interference or neglected opportunities.

But the upshot of the South African War and the subsequent grant of Responsible Government to the Transvaal and to the Free State, and finally the creation of Union, gradually brought about a complete change in these relations, and Downing Street ceased to be a hindrance and became a help.

Thus were gradually evolved the relations between the Imperial Government and the Dominion which now happily exist. Neither the British Government, the British Parliament, nor the People of Great Britain desire in the slightest degree to interfere with the full, free and unfettered liberty of action

of the Union. They could not if they would ; they would not if they could.

II

It has been said that for all practical purposes the history of South Africa to many Englishmen begins with the Jameson Raid which led up to the Boer War, combined with a hazy recollection of a dim and distant past in which the 'massacre of Isandlwana,' 'Majuba Hill,' and the retrocession to the Boers of the Transvaal find a prominent place.

I have no intention of dealing here with the past history of South Africa. And, indeed, the Act of Union, which united all South Africa, south of the Limpopo, into one homogeneous and self-governing Dominion, constituted such a profound and far-reaching change constitutional, parliamentary and administrative, economic and industrial, that from it may be said to date a new South Africa.

It was a stupendous step. If we compare the Union by way of area (not, of course, by way of population) to Europe, its conception vied even with the Napoleonic vision. It was as though the areas of France, Spain, Italy, and Belgium, four separate Countries, were united under one Central Government with four Provincial Councils.

The germ of Union was contained in the Treaty of Vereeniging. That it fructified was due to the grant of Responsible Government to the Transvaal, and to the Free State, which added two self-governing British Colonies to the two already in existence ; one of which, the Cape Colony, had enjoyed responsible government for forty years, and the other, Natal, for some twenty years.

The grant of Responsible Government to the two annexed Territories in 1906-7 was an essential step towards Union—as was indeed foreseen¹—for, without constitutional equality, no amalgamation between the four separate Colonies was feasible. Once, however, they were placed on terms of constitutional equality Union or Federation became the natural corollary; and the force of events, combined with mutual goodwill, brought the former about in an almost incredibly short space of time.

For fifty years previously, the federation of the different 'white' territories in South Africa had been in the air. Sir George Grey had favoured it in the fifties. The attempt by Lord Carnarvon in 1876 to carry it through with a high hand had put back the clock; and the policy and efforts of Hofmeyr and Rhodes in the same direction were shattered by the Raid. But, nevertheless, public opinion had for a long period been directed to the possibility of one day drawing into a closer bond the four States that made up the Realm of South Africa.

The actual position of affairs which rendered it essential that the separate Territories should be brought into closer relationship was no new growth, but dated back many years before the South African War. Fiscal, economic, and railway questions had been a fruitful source of jealousy, danger, trouble, and friction between the two Colonies of the Cape and Natal and the two Republics of the Transvaal

¹ The Secretary of State, Lord Elgin, in his covering Despatch of 1906 announcing the grant of immediate Responsible Government to the Transvaal, expressed the hope that "the step now taken will in due time lead to the union of the interests of the whole of His Majesty's Dominion in South Africa."

and the Orange Free State. The substitution of two British Colonies in lieu of the two Republics did little or nothing to render the position less acute or fraught with less dangerous possibilities.

In 1907 the white population of South Africa, which at that time barely exceeded a million, maintained four separate self-governing Colonies, each with its own Governor, its own Parliament, its own Government, and its own Administrative Departments Judicature and organization of Defence. Each Colony had its own agricultural, commercial, and industrial problems. There were four separate water-tight compartments, and each individual Colony had naturally more regard to its local interest than to the common interest of the whole.

Questions of railway extension and railway charges,¹ difficulties relating to customs, rivalry between the coastal and inland Colonies, and between port and port, were a source of perpetual friction, and led to increasingly strained relations.

The position of affairs was pithily summed up in the well-known Minute of the Cape Government of November 28th, 1906: "Ministers are impressed by the number of matters affecting the interest of the four Colonies which cannot be settled except with the concurrence of one or more of the South African Governments. . . . It has been found impossible to arrive at any complete and lasting settlement of some of the more important questions. The absence of an Authority competent to dispose

¹ A single line of railway passed through territory under the control of three different Administrations. "It is no exaggeration to say (wrote Lord Selborne in his Despatch of January 1907) that a field more thickly sown with the seed of future quarrel and strife than the railway system of South Africa does not exist."

of questions in which two or more Colonies are involved, operates to retard the free development of the country generally. . . . A state of friction exists which impairs the good relations of the various South African communities, and tends to excite a feeling of mutual mistrust which renders increasingly difficult the settlement of disputes between them."

Those in responsible positions had become more and more impressed by the dangerous possibilities that had been opening out. The first definite step was taken by Sir Starr Jameson ("Dr. Jim"), who had partially lived down his adventure of the Raid and had become, in 1904, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. In November 1906 his Government requested the High Commissioner, Lord Selborne (who was also Governor of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony, both still under Crown Colony Government) to put into a popular and concrete shape, for the information and consideration of the people of South Africa, the advantage and necessity of a closer union between the four Colonies.

Lord Selborne, with the concurrence of the Natal Government and of the provisional Governments of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, accepted the task, and drew up his historic Despatch and Memorandum which were published in January 1907; and which, dealing as they did exhaustively and trenchantly with the whole subject, gave a great impetus to the closer union movement.¹

The general view of those who were taking an active interest in the matter was that a conference of the four Colonies should be held to consider the question. It was obvious, however, that such a conference could not take place until the new Con-

¹ Command Paper 3564 of 1907.

stitutions in the Transvaal and in the Free State (in process of being carried through) came into being, and until the new Governments were actually in the saddle. The meeting was, therefore, postponed for a time.

The issue of Lord Selborne's Memorandum was, however, followed by discussion and negotiation. Botha himself was active in the matter. Early in 1907 he had become Prime Minister of the Transvaal, and in June of that year the Orange Free State also received Responsible Government and Mr. Fischer became Premier. About the same time Mr. Merri-man had succeeded Sir Starr Jameson as Prime Minister of the Cape, and Sir Frederick Moor had become Prime Minister of Natal. In September General Botha invited the other three Prime Ministers to a private conference at Pretoria, and they found themselves in general agreement on the question of a closer relationship of the four Colonies.

In May of the following year, 1908, an Inter-colonial Conference on Customs and Railways was held, but failed to arrive at an agreement. The discussions which took place at the Conference had only accentuated the fundamental differences of opinion and the conflicting local interest of the four Colonies. It had become clear that what might be called the "colony spirit," as opposed to a "union spirit," was increasing, to the detriment of South Africa as a whole ; and that the Colonies, instead of coming together, were drifting apart.

In the end the Conference, realizing the gravity of the situation, adopted the following Resolution (amongst others), which was proposed by General Botha and seconded by Mr. Merriman, "That in the opinion of this Conference the best interests and

the permanent prosperity of South Africa can only be secured by the early union, under the Crown of Great Britain, of the several Self-governing Colonies." It was further proposed that the resolutions adopted should be submitted to the Parliaments of the respective Colonies, and that a National Convention should be held to "consider and report on the most desirable form of South African union, and to prepare a draft Constitution."

A further influence was at work in the minds of the leading statesmen which made also for union. It was hoped and believed—and no one held the view more strongly than General Botha—that such a step would not only lead to administrative union, but to a lasting bond between the two white races; and this view, subsequently largely inspired the Convention. This aspect was emphasized by President Steyn in a moving speech that he made when the language question was under discussion, which met with the cordial endorsement of the assembled Statesmen. "I have (he said) entire confidence in the people of South Africa. I believe in them and would trust them, and they would work out their own destiny. The differences in race between the people were slight. They inter-married freely, they lived together in friendly social intercourse and worked together, but the end was that there were still two races in South Africa and the country was divided. This union of the races was the great problem before South African statesmen. I would say this, the late war brought in its train untold misery and ruin, it shattered families and left the land desolate, but I would not regret the war if it only left the two races in South Africa united. The sacrifice was great, but the end would be worth all

the suffering and all the loss. I believe to-day that real unity is possible and that we shall succeed if only the Convention would take a broad view and establish and maintain equality."

The time, therefore, appeared to be ripe for a forward movement; and, in October 1908, a National Convention was summoned to discuss the question of the future relations of the four Colonies, with a view to arriving at some form of closer union.

III

The first meeting of the National Convention—an historic event—was held at Durban in October 1908.¹ The number of delegates had been fixed in proportion to the population; the Cape sent twelve, the Transvaal eight, Natal and the Orange River Colony five each. Rhodesia was represented by the Administrator and two others, with a right to speak but not to vote. After a short adjournment the Convention reassembled later in the year at Cape Town, and its final meetings were held at Bloemfontein in May 1909. The Chairman was the Chief Justice of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry de Villiers (afterwards Lord de Villiers) of Huguenot-Dutch extraction, and President Steyn was the Vice-President.

The Convention was composed of the most prominent statesmen of each of the four Colonies, who amongst them represented every phase and aspect of South African political life and view, past and present. It was well said that more wonderful than the Constitution itself were the signatures, Dutch and British, attached to the draft proposals.

¹ For an account of the Convention see *The Inner History of the National Convention*, by the Hon. Sir Edgar Walton.

Among the representatives of Cape Colony were Mr. Merriman (the Prime Minister), Sir Starr Jameson, Dr. (Sir Thomas) Smartt, Mr. Sauer, Mr. Malan, and Mr. (Sir) Edgar Walton. Amongst those from the Transvaal were General Botha, ex-Acting President Schalk Burger, General de la Rey and General Smuts, together with Sir George Farrar and Sir Percy FitzPatrick. The Free State was represented, amongst others, by President Steyn, General de Wet, General Hertzog, and Mr. Fischer (Prime Minister); and Natal by Sir Frederick Moor (Prime Minister), Mr. Smythe, late Prime Minister, and others.

All these statesmen and the other representatives rendered invaluable service at the Convention, and share the credit of a remarkable achievement. Botha brought his enlightened common sense, his spirit of fair play, his talent for conciliation, his patience and his personal charm to bear, and exercised a profound influence on the proceedings.

The task before the Convention was one of great gravity and immense difficulty. Rivalries and prejudices, provincialism and racialism had to be met and overcome. The formidable problems which faced the Convention were only to be solved by a spirit of compromise and of goodwill, which, fortunately, was abundantly forthcoming throughout the proceedings. The people of South Africa, as General Smuts once said, were at that juncture prepared to "pool their patriotism as well as their material resources."

The first question which had to be decided was whether the basis of amalgamation should be Union or Federation. Prior to the meeting of the Convention, it had been generally assumed that Federation

rather than Union was the better and probable solution. But as soon as the Convention met, the former quickly lost ground and the latter came into general favour. Most of the leading Statesmen, including Merriman, Botha, Jameson, and Steyn, threw their weight on to the side of Union. This they did in the belief that administratively Union would be more efficient and more economical than Federation, and that union-patriotism would tend to supersede provincial-patriotism, and thus be more likely to weld the people and the two white races into one whole.

Finally, it was agreed that the basis of the South African Constitution should be the supremacy of the Parliament of the Union, and that the four separate Provinces should cease to retain any sovereign rights. Each Province was to have a Provincial Council—a glorified County Council—with considerable local powers of administration and expenditure; but its powers were to be delegated to it by Parliament, and be subject to Parliament. No one now doubts but that the conclusion to which the Convention came in deciding for Union rather than Federation was wise and sound.

The questions which gave rise to the gravest controversy, some of which on more than one occasion nearly brought the Convention to an end, were those connected with Language, with Franchise, with the number of Members that each of the four Colonies should send to the Union Parliament, and with the question of the Official Capital.

Financial, railway, fiscal and other economic questions, which had so often in the past proved intractable or insoluble, were found of comparatively easy solution on the definite basis of Union.

The Convention decided that the Administration of Justice was to be of Union and not of Provincial concern ; and the scheme of the Judiciary which was accepted by the Convention was mainly the work of the President.

The Language question was one fraught with prejudice and sentiment. But it was discussed with good temper and consideration on both sides, and finally it was unanimously agreed that there should be absolute equality in every respect between the English and Dutch languages.¹

The Franchise differed for the European voter in different Colonies. In the Cape Colony there was a qualification test, and coloured persons or natives were admitted to the franchise on equal terms with the whites.² In Natal, the natives and coloured could, nominally, obtain a vote, but the conditions

¹ The Bilingual Clause of the Treaty of Vereeniging was as follows :

" *Clause 5.*—The Dutch language will be taught in public schools in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, where the parents of the children desire it, and will be allowed in Courts of Law when necessary for the better and more effectual administration of Justice."

The Convention went a great deal farther, and Clause 137 of the Act of Union runs as follows :

" Both the English and Dutch languages shall be the Official languages of the Union, and shall be treated on a footing of equality and possess and enjoy equal freedom, rights, and privileges ; all records, journals, and proceedings of Parliament shall be kept in both languages, and all Bills, Acts, and Notices of general and public importance or interest shall be issued by the Government of the Union in both languages."

² It was estimated that there were some 20,000 native or coloured electors out of 135,000 electors on the register in the Cape Colony. Natives and coloured men were qualified also to sit in the Cape Parliament ; but during the fifty years of the existence of this right no attempt had been made to exercise it. The Convention abolished the right (see Clause 44 of the Act of Union).

were stringent and only two native voters were on the register at that time. In the Transvaal and in the Free State there was manhood suffrage for whites, but no native or coloured person could obtain a vote.

It was found hopeless to attempt to adopt any uniform basis of suffrage for the Europeans, and impossible to arrive at any agreement in regard to the suffrage for the native. Finally both questions were settled by accepting, for the time being, the existing franchise in each of the four Colonies; and, subject to certain safeguards for the native voters of the Cape Province, leaving to the Union Parliament the power to unify or to alter the franchise at some future time if it so desired.

The question of the respective number of Members of Parliament to be allocated to each Colony gave rise to heated discussion, carried almost to breaking-point. In the end a compromise was accepted which, at the expense of the Cape and the Transvaal, gave to the two smaller States, Natal and the Orange Free State (as it was in future to be called) seventeen members each, a considerably larger representation than they were entitled to claim on the existing basis either of electorate or of population.

The number of members of the first Union Parliament was fixed at 121—Cape 51, Transvaal 36, Natal 17, Orange Free State 17. These respective numbers were to increase according to a fixed quota of population until the total number reached 150. The present number of constituencies in the Cape, Natal, and the Orange Free State are the same as in 1910, while the Transvaal has gradually increased its number, which stood at 49 at the last election.¹

¹ Since increased by one for the next election.

One other crucial question had to be decided, namely the selection of the official Capital ; and the rival claims of Pretoria and of Cape Town nearly wrecked the Convention. Cape Town based its claim to be the capital of the Union on the ground that it was the oldest town in South Africa both in occupation and in parliamentary tradition, on the position and convenience of its port and the beauty of its surroundings. Pretoria based its claim on its central position and accessibility, and on the fact that the Transvaal was the most flourishing and populous industrial portion of the Union ; and moreover that it was making serious financial sacrifices in order to bring about Union.

Neither protagonist was disposed to give way ; and, as a compromise, the question was considered whether (as in Australia) some town other than Cape Town or Pretoria should be made the official Capital, —such as Parys, in the Free State. Very fortunately this compromise was not adopted ; and it was finally decided, at the suggestion of the Chairman,¹ that there should be no official Capital, but (to quote the Act) “Cape Town shall be the Seat of the Legislature of the Union,” and “Pretoria shall be the Seat of Government of the Union,” while Bloemfontein was consoled by being made the Judicial Centre.

Undoubtedly it is a real disadvantage, administratively and economically, that the Parliamentary capital and the Administrative Capital should be a

¹ The original suggestion of division was, I believe, made by General Smuts privately to the Chairman, who adopted the principle of the proposal. Smuts, however, had proposed that Pretoria should be the Parliamentary and Cape Town the Administrative Centre. Sir Henry de Villiers reversed the proposal on the ground of the greater parliamentary tradition of Cape Town.

thousand miles apart—as far distant as London is from Rome. Much administrative inconvenience and disorganisation, as well as considerable expense, are necessarily involved. For a considerable part of the year, during the Parliamentary Session, Ministers and Heads of Departments have to be in Cape Town while the ordinary work of the Departments is being carried on at Pretoria. But, take it as a whole, the arrangement has not worked as badly as might have been anticipated,—while unification in itself brought about greater concentration, uniformity, and efficiency of administration. In any case, the arrangement was the price of Union, and the price had to be paid; for, failing compromise and agreement, the Convention would have broken down.

At an early stage of its proceedings, the Convention decided that Native Affairs should appertain to the Union Government. Under the Schedule to the Act, provision was made for the possible future inclusion in the Union of the Territories “belonging to or under the protection of His Majesty”; and the terms and conditions under which such inclusion should be carried out were stated in the Schedule. The main conditions were that land in Basutoland, or any land forming part of the native reserves in the Bechuanaland Protectorate or in Swaziland, should not be alienated from the natives; that the custom of holding pitsos, or other recognized forms of native Assemblies, should be maintained; and that the sale of intoxicating liquors to the natives should be prohibited.

Gradually order emerged, and a Draft Constitution was agreed upon, made public in February 1909, and referred to the four Colonial Parliaments

for their assent. Natal made a few suggestions, while the Cape and the Free State raised some other points.

The Convention met again at Bloemfontein in May 1909 to consider these amendments, some of which were of a serious character and might even then have involved the breakdown of the Convention. The delegates, however, managed to steer their way through the dangerous breakers into calm water, and in the end unanimously agreed on the final Draft.

Natal required that it should be referred to a Referendum in Natal; and, in the following June, it was accepted there by a three to one majority. The Draft Constitution was despatched to England, and some of the leading South African statesmen, including General Botha, went over at the same time to place the measure before the Imperial Government and the British Parliament.

The Imperial Government accepted the Draft without any material amendment, the British Parliament gladly and cordially endorsed what they understood to be the free choice of South Africa itself, and on December 20th, 1909, the Crown gave its assent.

The new Constitution came into force on May 31st, 1910—the eighth anniversary of the Peace of Pretoria. The General Election took place in October, and the first Parliament of the Union was opened in November 1910, with all due pomp and ceremony, by the Duke of Connaught.

PART II

THE UNION IN BEING

I

IT is stated in the Preamble to the South Africa Act that "it is desirable for the welfare and future progress of South Africa that the several British Colonies therein should be united under one Government in a legislative Union under the Crown of Great Britain and Ireland."

The Act of Union, founded on a democratic basis, and resting on a Parliament directly elected by the people of the Union, with a Government responsible to Parliament, was the outcome of natural causes—a native product not one of exotic growth. It represented the deliberate, free and unfettered choice of the people of South Africa as a whole and of both races. The contract was indeed not so much between South Africa and the United Kingdom and the rest of the British Empire, as between the South Africans themselves.

The Great Adventure was undertaken under a stress of deep natural emotion. Men saw visions and dreamed dreams of what the future would bring forth, and a wave of racial optimism passed over the country. The slate had been wiped clean; and the new Constitution, written clear and broad, and based on absolute equality, was to obliterate the dread past with its misunderstandings and its

bitter memories, and to bring about a spirit of partnership and goodwill.

It is conceivable that among those who took part in the Conference and who signed the draft of the Constitution, there may have been some who made a mental reservation as to the binding nature of the engagement into which they were entering. "I want," said the frugal-minded young man, who had been jilted before, to the goldsmith from whom he was ordering an engagement ring, "I want 'Augustus to Isabel' engraved on the ring. But, look here, don't cut 'Isabel' *very* deep."

Be this so or no, it is an undoubted fact that the Convention as a whole, and the public at large, had no misgivings, and made no reservations mental or otherwise, and were convinced that the Act of Union constituted a mutual and solemn compact between the four Provinces and the two Races.

It is, I believe, universally agreed that the four Colonies thus merged into Union did not sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, but that, in the main, Union has been an enormous advantage to South Africa as a whole, and to the various races committed to its charge.

No doubt the Statesmen of the country were over sanguine in their hopes and beliefs—the Millennium unfortunately has a knack of not arriving. Too much was expected and too soon. Such an immense and far-reaching constitutional change, though brought about as it was by mutual and unanimous agreement, could not reach its fulfilment without the emergence of many difficulties, some foreseen, others unforeseen. Reaction was inevitable; friction, misunderstanding, grievances, and disillusionments were bound to arise.

But South Africa is a country of enormous natural vitality. A planted sapling becomes a tree in an incredibly short space of time. One day the dried-up veld is a uniform brown and all vegetation is apparently dead ; a couple of days and nights of rain, and it is all at once splashed with vivid green.

In the same way Union has grown, politically and materially much more rapidly, and put down its roots and put out its shoots in a shorter time than would have been possible in an older country.

Already, before the Great War, the Union had passed through some dark days. But most of the difficulties which arose were in spite of, and not in consequence of Union, and would have been even more formidable and less easy of solution if the four Colonies had still been separate entities.

Then, four years only after Union had come into being and before it had found itself, came the Great War—twenty years too soon—with all its profoundly disturbing and dynamic elements, and subjected the new Constitution to a super-strain. But, nevertheless, though the cement of the foundation of 1906 had hardly set, and the mortar of the building of 1910 was scarcely dry, the structure was unshaken. It stood four-square to all the winds that blew, and proved that the corner-stone had been well and truly laid.

The Union of South Africa has undoubtedly acquired the most valuable of all possessions—a breadth of vision, self-confidence in its own powers founded on experience, experience of some failures and of greater successes, and a profound belief in its future.

The Benjamin of the Dominions, the Union has grown steadily in wisdom and stature, in strength

and influence. Being South Africa, it cannot expect to be immune from recurrent emotions and disturbances; setbacks will occur, and the unexpected will intervene. But, however the political wheel may turn, the continued growth, development, and self-dependence of the Union of South Africa are well assured.

CHAPTER III

THE POSITION OF AFFAIRS IN THE UNION AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND DIRECTLY AFTER

BEFORE describing the action which General Botha and his Cabinet took at the beginning of the Great War and immediately afterwards, and the policy on which it was founded, it will be well to summarise shortly the position of affairs in South Africa at the time, in order to show clearly the problems with which the Government were confronted, and with which they had to deal at that grave crisis.

At the very beginning of the War, Botha and his Colleagues were faced with two immediate and momentous decisions; first as to the part South Africa should play in the War, and secondly what action the Union should take in regard to German South West Africa.

They arrived at their decision without hesitation. The British Empire, of which the Union was a part, was at war, and the King's enemies were the enemies of the Union. South Africa had been entrusted with Self-government, and the Union must, therefore, make itself responsible for its own defence and internal order, and free the Imperial troops for use against the common foe.

War was declared with Germany on August 4th, 1914, and, on the same day, the Union Government telegraphed to the Imperial Government stating

that they fully recognised the obligations of the Union in the event of hostilities, and that they desired to assure the Imperial Government of their readiness to take all such measures as might be necessary for the defence of the Union. They added that, if His Majesty's Government required the Imperial troops (other than garrison artillery), then stationed in South Africa, numbering some six thousand men, for service elsewhere, they would gladly employ the Defence Force of the Union to fulfil the duties entrusted to the Imperial troops in South Africa. On August 7th the Imperial Government telegraphed gratefully accepting the offer of the Union Government to take over defence and internal order themselves, and to release the Imperial troops then in South Africa.

In another communication they stated that if the Union desired, and felt themselves able to seize such parts of German South West Territory as would give them the command of Lüderitzbucht and Swakopmund, with their coast wireless stations, and especially if the long-distance wireless station at Windhuk in the interior could be occupied, the Imperial Government would feel that the Union was undertaking a great and urgent Imperial service.

The Union Government promptly replied that they cordially agreed to co-operate with the Imperial Government and to assist, in conjunction with the Admiralty, in sending an Expedition for the purposes indicated. They proceeded at once to take steps to carry out their share of the operations and to prepare for the campaign.

During the interval between the time that my predecessor, Lord Gladstone, left South Africa in

July 1914, and my arrival there on September 8th, the Chief Justice Lord de Villiers was the Acting Governor General. His sudden death two days before I landed was a great loss to his country, and a serious one to myself by depriving me of his wise counsel and help.

My passage from England had some time previously been booked for August 8th. But, consequent on the outbreak of War, my sailing was delayed by the Admiralty for a fortnight, as a German cruiser was known to be on the line of route—and a Governor General is 'contraband of war.'

We landed safely in South Africa on September 8th. I was sworn in on the same day, and on the following day opened Parliament for a special War Session—rather a formidable undertaking for one completely new to the duties of a Governor General.¹

The House had been summoned to meet in Special Session on September 9th to coincide with my arrival, and to enable the Government to inform Parliament of the steps they had taken on the outbreak of war; to pass certain necessary measures dealing with alien persons and property, and to obtain the assent of Parliament for the Expedition directed against German South West.

The Military position when Parliament met was as follows:—The Imperial troops, with the exception of some 1500 to 1600 Infantry, had left for Europe, and the remainder were under orders to sail. Two separate Land Expeditions had already been

¹ I had been deprived, moreover, of the whole of my Staff all of whom had at once gone to the Front; and every one of whom, poor fellows, was subsequently killed. Their places were, at a very few days' notice however taken by kindly and efficient volunteers, to whom I am ever grateful.

organised with a view to an advance against German South West from the South. Two Oversea Expeditions were also being rapidly organised and fitted out; the one to capture Luderitz, and the other to be landed at Walfisch Bay and to occupy Swakopmund.

The interval between the formal opening of Parliament and its actual meeting to consider the Address, was, as usual, devoted to a "caucus," meeting of the South African Party before whom, as was customary, the Prime Minister and his colleagues placed their proposals for the Session.

When, however, General Botha met the Caucus, he experienced some difficulty in obtaining the full concurrence of his party to the proposed Expedition directed against German South West. His supporters were prepared to give their hearty support to the Government in connection with the War in Europe in which Germany was the aggressor, and to resist any attack on Union territory; but, for various reasons, many of them felt a genuine reluctance to undertake an Expedition without provocation against German South West Africa.

General Botha's arguments and those of his Colleagues, and his great personal influence, finally prevailed, and on the Motion for an Address he obtained a unanimous vote of his own Party, as well as the support of the Unionist Opposition and of the Labour Party.

The Address to the King assured His Majesty of the loyal support of the Union Parliament in bringing to a successful issue the momentous conflict which had been forced upon the Empire in defence of the principles of liberty and of International honour, and of its whole-hearted determination to

take all measures necessary for defending the interests of the Union, and for co-operating with His Majesty's Imperial Government to maintain the security and integrity of the Empire.

General Botha's speech was frank and courageous, and made a deep impression on the House, and an Amendment directed against the German South West Expedition was defeated by 92 to 12. The House adjourned after a few days' sitting.

Meanwhile the first part of the Oversea Expedition had occupied Luderitz without resistance, and the Expedition to Walfisch Bay was being made ready to sail, while the Southern Land Force had made some progress.

But, within a few days of my arrival, there came a totally unexpected development which altered the whole political and military position, and led before long, to the postponement of the further prosecution of the Campaign for some two months.

On September 15th, the day after the House had risen, the unlooked for and disquieting resignation of General Beyers, the Commandant-General, opened the first Act in a Drama which led up to a tragic ending—the Rebellion in the Transvaal and in the Orange Free State.

I well remember the incident. I was playing my first game of golf on the 15th September, within a week after my arrival, at Wynberg near Cape Town with its beautiful surroundings and the Hottentot-Hollands mountains in the distance. We played a foursome, the Prime Minister and Mr. N. de Wet (Minister of Justice) against my A.D.C. and myself. It was a lovely day and Botha was in very good spirits. The short Session had gone off satisfactorily, he had got his people with him and had received

their full support, and things appeared to be going well. We were about half way through the game, when a messenger came from the pavilion to say that General Smuts had motored out and wanted to speak to the General at once. Botha thereupon went back to the pavilion, leaving de Wet to play the game alone. In about twenty minutes he returned, looking very serious—"Beyers has resigned quite unexpectedly and, as far as we can judge, the position is a grave one. Smuts and myself must go to Pretoria tonight, and you must follow as soon as can be arranged." He motored back at once with Smuts to Cape Town, and left in a special train for Pretoria that evening ; I followed two days later.

On our arrival at Pretoria Station, bedecked with flags in honour of our official reception, the first thing that caught our attention as we steamed into the station, was a railway coach draped in black and covered with wreaths. It contained the coffin of General de la Rey.

But these events, and what followed, must be treated in a separate Chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE REBELLION

PART I

SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1914

I

THE extent and magnitude of the Rebellion, or "armed protest" as some of its sympathisers preferred to call it, and the formidable danger which faced the Union and the British connection, were, I imagine, never fully realised in England.

Indeed, the gravity of the movement, and the consequences which would have followed if the rising had "caught on," were not clearly realised even in South Africa itself, except amongst those who were in the inner circle.

The Censorship was very severe, and the proclamation of Martial Law on October 12th, simultaneously with the public announcement of Maritz's treachery, came as a thunderbolt to the public at large; while, later, the Rebellion had actually begun before the citizens of the Union, especially in the Cape Province and Natal, became aware, from a public announcement on October 26th, of the gravity of the position.

It must not be inferred from the comparative ease with which the Rebellion was put down, that it was not a most formidable revolt, or that, for a time, the position was not one fraught with very grave

peril to the Union. A considerable portion of the Western Transvaal, including the district round Pretoria, was involved in the Rebellion : while the greater portion of the North East district of the Orange Free State were actively in revolt. In all, some twelve to thirteen thousand rebel Burghers were in the field, a considerable proportion of them mounted men, though many were inadequately armed and short of ammunition.

The outbreak itself came as a complete surprise to the Government themselves, and no preparations had been made to meet it. Fortunately, however, in view of the War and the projected Expedition against German South West, a large proportion of the Defence Force had already been mobilized, and a considerable number of troops were under arms and immediately available for its suppression.

When the Rebellion began in good earnest, therefore, the Government were in a position to take the matter promptly in hand. They at once sent adequate forces against Maritz ; they were able subsequently to deal effectively with the rebels in the Transvaal, and immediately afterwards with the rising in the Orange Free State, and generally to circumscribe the area of active revolt. The Rebellion itself, and the consequences it entailed, were indeed more serious from the political than from the military point of view.

The outbreak of war between England and Germany created great excitement throughout South Africa, and re-awakened among some of the 'old population' of the South African Republic and of the Orange Free State, hopes and aspirations which time and constitutional changes had gradually been

obliterating. The milder malcontents began to hope that the moment had arrived for discrediting and ousting the Government; while to the more sanguine it appeared as though England's difficulties were a Heaven-sent opportunity, which might never again occur, of recovering their lost Independence.

The first indication of unrest occurred in the Lichtenburg district in the western Transvaal almost immediately after war was declared, and before the meeting of Parliament.

The unrest appears to have partly originated in the credence given by the local farmers and others to a so-called "Prophet," van Rensburg by name. This man had, during the South African War, attained much notoriety and influence in some parts of the Transvaal on account of certain events in connection with the war which had been foretold by him, and which even the less credulous believed, had been fulfilled to the letter.¹

Van Rensburg had recently declared that he had seen two bulls fighting, and that the Red Bull (England) would be defeated by the Grey Bull (Germany). Later he saw in a vision the fall of the Botha Government and its supersession by a "Vierkleur" Government (four-colours, the S.A. Republic flag), and he asserted that the change of Government would take place without any blood being shed. Another vision had pointed to the number "fifteen" as the day of liberation. These prophecies tended to confirm the ignorant and the credulous in the idea that the moment for action had come.

¹ One such was a prophecy it was generally believed he had made, and which pointed to the defeat and capture of Lord Methuen by General de la Rey, which subsequently took place.

Certain disaffected Commandants and Veldcornets publicly announced that a meeting would be held on August the fifteenth—the prophet's number—at Treurfontein in the Transvaal, at which the burghers were invited to attend mounted, armed and equipped for service. It was stated that General de la Rey would attend and address the meeting.

General de la Rey had been one of the most successful Commanders during the South African War. He was a lovable personality, a striking and chivalrous figure, and was held in great veneration in the Transvaal. He felt conscientious scruples against an attack by the Union on German South West and this view he expressed in the Senate; he was himself greatly under the influence of van Rensburg who lived in his district.

General Botha sent for him to Pretoria and, after a prolonged interview, de la Rey undertook, while attending the meeting, to do his best to calm the excitement. At the meeting he exhorted those present who had come unarmed, some eight hundred in all, to remain cool and calm, and the men dispersed peacefully and returned to their homes.

The clouds had apparently cleared away, and the danger been averted. But within a few weeks came a bolt from the blue, and from a quarter where it was least expected.

General Beyers was Commandant-General of the Citizen Defence Force, and was fully trusted by the Government. He had seen and approved of the assurance which had been conveyed to the Imperial Government immediately on the outbreak of War that the Imperial troops could safely be removed from the Union, as the Government would make themselves responsible for peace and order

in South Africa. As Commandant-General he had been in consultation with the Government and the Defence Department in reference to the plan of campaign against German South West; the appointment to, and the arrangements for the Expeditionary Forces had been discussed with and approved by him. It had, indeed, been provisionally arranged that he should take command of the Expedition.¹

On September 15th General Beyers, quite unexpectedly, and without any previous communication with the Government, wrote a letter to General Smuts, as Minister for Defence, resigning his post as Commandant-General. The letter, which took the

¹ One interesting point in connection with the Rebellion may be noted.

Beyers was Speaker of the first Transvaal Parliament after the grant of Responsible Government. His appointment as Speaker was hotly opposed by the British section, as they believed that he would be a prejudiced and partial Speaker. He proved, however, to be an admirable Speaker, efficient, courageous and impartial; and a unanimous tribute was paid to his merits by all Parties in the Transvaal when their Parliament three years later came to an end by absorption in the Union.

When the first Union Government was formed in 1910, it was not possible, as Beyers had hoped and expected, to find a place in it for him. As a sort of consolation stake, and also because of his record as Speaker of the Transvaal House, Botha desired to make him Speaker of the Union Parliament. But the Cape South Africa Party members strongly contended that the Speakership was their due and carried their point in the Party Caucus. Beyers believed that Botha, if he had chosen, could have secured him the Speakership, and was sore and disgruntled. He was subsequently made Commandant-General when the Defence Force came into being a year or two later.

If Beyers had been elected Speaker, and some reliable person had been Commandant-General in 1914, humanly speaking the Rebellion in the Transvaal would not have taken place. However, the consideration of historical "Ifs," though absorbingly interesting, is but futile.

form of a political manifesto, was published by him in a local paper before it was received by the Government. The ostensible ground for resignation was his objection to an attack on German South West.

There can be little doubt that before his resignation General Beyers was actively concerned, with some few other Officers of the Defence Force, in the preparations which were being made for forcible action. Since August, moreover, he had been in personal communication and private correspondence with Colonel Maritz who, at his persistent request, had been placed in command of the Union Force concentrated in the northern district of the Cape Province adjoining German territory. Maritz, as he himself subsequently admitted, and indeed boasted, was at that very time in direct communication with the Germans, and had arrived at a definite agreement of co-operation with them.

Arrangements had been made by General Beyers and Major Kemp for a meeting to be held at Potchefstroom on the 15th September, the date of the former's resignation. Potchefstroom was the training centre of the Citizen Forces in the Transvaal, and some 1,600 men were assembled there for ordinary training purposes. The object in view was undoubtedly to persuade these troops to mutiny; and the plan of campaign appears to have been to march from Potchefstroom to Pretoria, seize the capital and hoist the old Republican flag. Maritz would have co-operated from Upington with the Force under his control; and the Germans were prepared to supply arms and ammunition.

Beyers had been in communication with General de la Rey and had persuaded him to attend the

meeting at Potchefstroom. As far as can be ascertained, de la Rey had not been taken into the confidence of the conspirators, and was innocent of any rebellious designs ; and, indeed, it is improbable that he would have voluntarily joined a conspiracy directed against General Botha for whom he had a great personal affection and regard. The conspirators probably thought that if they could get de la Rey—a very impressionable and emotional man—to the meeting, he would, under the stress of feeling, say or do something that would implicate him in their designs.

This was the most critical moment of the whole revolt. If the meeting had taken place, and General de la Rey had been seduced from his allegiance, and the appeal to the troops at Potchefstroom had been successful—as it probably would have been, for the ground had been carefully prepared—a very grave position would have been created.

At the moment in question the Government were entirely ignorant of the mischief that was brewing ; the unrest of August had apparently died away. They had no suspicion that Beyers, still Commandant-General, who was cognisant of, and apparently in accord with all their military plans, would suddenly turn traitor, or that Maritz, in command of the Upington Force, was also meditating treason. Not anticipating treacherous action on the part of these two Officers, they had made no preparations to meet such an emergency. The Defence Force was not yet fully mobilised ; the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence and the other Ministers were two days' journey distant at the Cape attending the sittings of Parliament.

But, owing to a dramatic and tragic incident,

the psychological opportunity passed away never to return.

At this very time a gang of armed desperadoes had been house-breaking in the neighbourhood of Johannesburg and had committed more than one murder. On the evening of September 15th the police officials, who had been warned that the robbers were endeavouring to escape in a motor, stationed armed police patrols along the main roads leading from and to Johannesburg, with orders peremptorily to stop, if necessary by force, and to search all cars entering or leaving the town. Two cars only, on different sides of Johannesburg, ignored the signals to stop. One was that of a doctor; his car was fired at and the bullet killed him. The other car was that of Beyers; with him was General de la Rey, whom he was taking from Pretoria to Potchefstroom passing through Johannesburg. Beyers, alarmed by repeated signals to stop, tried to rush the patrols; one of them thereupon fired at a tyre, the bullet ricocheted off the road and killed General de la Rey.

This accidental occurrence completely upset the plans of the conspirators, and greatly alarmed Beyers personally; and by the time that they were again ready to move, Maritz had shewn his hand, Martial Law had been proclaimed, thousands of loyal burghers were under arms and available for defence or attack.

The funeral of General de la Rey which took place at Lichtenburg on September 20th, was attended by hundreds of people from all parts of the Transvaal. It was an anxious and critical moment. Excitement had been worked up by the hotheads among the disaffected section, who attended in

force with mischief in their minds. The motor in which General de la Rey had been travelling when he was shot was exhibited in the Market Square, bedecked with the Transvaal and Free State Republican flags ; ugly rumours were put about as to the circumstances of his death, and inflammatory speeches were made. The feeling was intense, and the atmosphere was heavily charged.

General Botha accompanied by General Smuts attended the funeral. The attitude of many of those present was hostile and threatening, and any untoward incident would have caused an explosion, which might have brought about fatal results. At the grave Botha spoke first. He pronounced a heart-felt eulogy of General de la Rey, which did much to calm the feelings of those present and to bring about a greater sense of the solemnity of the occasion.

Under this influence, Beyers, who followed solemnly repudiated the idea that he had any disloyal intentions ; and two days afterwards he again declared that " rebellion was the thing farthest from his mind." At a private meeting which he had a little later with General Botha at the latter's house, he told the General that he intended to go back to his Office and his work. For the moment he may have been sincere in his protestations.

Shortly after it was publicly announced that General Botha, who had taken over the Office of Commandant-General, would himself take command of the German South West Expedition then in course of preparation, and at the same time the Government called for seven thousand additional volunteers for the Campaign. The announcement was received with the utmost satisfaction throughout

the Country, and its appeal to the patriotism and loyalty of the Dutch-speaking section, did much to diminish the feeling of antipathy to the Expedition.

The black clouds appeared to have lifted, and again it looked as though the worst were over. So much was this the case that, in the course of a letter to the Secretary of State, dated September 24th, I observed that while the position had been "really serious and ugly, people talking and writing freely of Civil War, and Botha and Co. very much disturbed, it seemed to be now confidently thought that the dangerous position had been safely passed." I added however, that "it would be folly to prophesy in this Country."

And, within a few days, the sky soon again became overcast and the thunder-clouds rolled up again, blacker than ever. It was now Maritz's turn to act, and at the end of September he threw off the mask.

It had some time before become evident to Ministers and to myself, from various indications that were not then known to the public, that Colonel Maritz was acting in a suspicious manner, and grave doubts had arisen as to how far he could be trusted. On September 23rd, he was instructed to move his Force, some 1,200 men, towards the border in order to co-operate with the Southern Force in its advance against German South West. He replied in a long and insolent telegram, and stated that if he were to be required to cross the border, he would desire to have his resignation accepted.

On the 26th a detachment of the Southern Force were surprised and badly cut up at Sandfontein, after they had crossed the Orange River into German Territory at Ramans Drift. This disaster was

largely attributable to the fact that Maritz, instead of advancing as he had been instructed to do, and thus relieving the pressure of the Germans, remained where he was.

This direct disobedience to orders and Maritz's general conduct gave rise to much uneasiness. He was instructed to report himself at Pretoria, but this he declined to do. After some temporising, during which loyal reinforcements were dispatched to Uppington under Colonel Coen Brits, Maritz was instructed to report himself to the Colonel. Instead, however, of reporting himself, he broke camp and retired from Uppington with his whole force towards the German border. On the 9th October, after disarming those Officers and men who refused to throw in their lot with him—they were subsequently handed over to the Germans, sent North and released on the capture of Tsumeb in the following July—he hoisted the Vierkleur and crossed the border into German territory.

It may be convenient to complete here the account of the Maritz incident.

During October fighting took place between the Government troops, who had been reinforced, and Maritz's men, sometimes assisted by the Germans. But by October 28th, Colonel Brits was able to report that operations were practically at an end.

From that time onwards little was heard of Maritz, until Major Kemp,¹ who had gone out in Rebellion in the Transvaal, joined him at the end of November with a mounted force 700 to 800 strong, after an arduous trek of some weeks during which he

¹ Chief Staff Officer at Potchefstroom. He was in league with Beyers from the beginning. He was a Major in the Defence Force and a General in the Boer War. He is now a Member of Parliament.

managed to elude the Government troops in the Upington and Kuruman districts. This accretion of strength heartened Maritz and his German Allies ; and, on December 30th, Maritz and Kemp, together, attacked the Government Forces and inflicted on them a severe defeat.

This was, however, their last substantial success ; and at the end of January 1915 they made a final assault on Upington and were disastrously defeated. On February 3rd the remaining rebels under Kemp and Maritz to the number of 1,230 surrendered unconditionally. Kemp and his Officers, and the " prophet," who was with him, also surrendered ; but Maritz himself, with a few followers, retired to German South West, and on its occupation by the Union troops he took refuge in Portuguese territory and was there interned.

It may be added that, as regards Maritz, there was an almost universal feeling of detestation at his treachery, and no sympathy was expressed with him in any quarter of the Union.

II

To return to the general position at the time of Maritz's act of mutiny and treachery. Martial Law had already been applied to certain strategic districts ; and on Sunday October 11th, the day after Colonel Maritz's decisive action was known, the Government, at a Cabinet meeting held that day, decided to advise me as Governor General to proclaim Martial Law throughout the Union.

They informed me that in their opinion this step was rendered necessary by the dangerous state of affairs which was shown to exist as evidenced by the shameful treachery of Colonel Maritz, combined

with the previous resignations of General Beyers and Major Kemp. It seemed clear also that collusion existed at least between Maritz and these two Officers, and possibly between them and General de Wet and others who had been publicly named by Maritz.

Before these events had occurred, the Government, in view of the objection taken in some quarters to compulsory service for the German South West Expedition, had asked for volunteers in lieu of commandeering for service. Volunteering was now at once stopped, and mounted Commandos and other Regiments were called out for service against Maritz and for general defence. To this call there was an immediate and admirable response.

At the beginning of October, General Christian de Wet had come actively upon the scene.

General de Wet had an honourable record in the South African War and his dramatic exploits had struck public imagination. At the Vereeniging Conference he was a "bitter ender" but, finally, for the sake of the solidarity desired by all, he had signed the Treaty. After the Peace he had taken the Oath of Allegiance; and when Responsible Government was granted to the Free State he had become a member of the Fischer Government. Later he had taken a prominent and effective part in the Convention that resulted in Union. This record, combined with his advanced age, gave him a remarkable influence in the Orange Free State.¹

¹ General de Wet died in 1922. His Funeral was a public event and was attended by representatives of both sections of the Dutch. The Prime Minister (Gen. Smuts) was among those who attended, and he paid a warm tribute to the General's exploits and patriotism. De Wet's widow was granted a Pension by the Government.

At the end of September de Wet and Beyers had attended together a meeting at Lichtenburg in the Transvaal, at which the former had declared that, though he was very strongly opposed to the attack on German South West, he intended to act constitutionally. Other meetings were held early in October, both in the Transvaal and in the Free State, at which de Wet was present, and at which the German South West Campaign was denounced.

But the feeling of unrest was extending, and the state of affairs was gradually becoming worse. De Wet and Beyers were accompanied wherever they went by armed bodyguards, and bands of disaffected, armed and mounted Burghers were collecting and riding about the disaffected districts, while the Government on their part were concentrating their troops. "The position is (I wrote to the Secretary of State) giving rise to much anxiety."

The Government, who had meanwhile been making preparations to meet an outbreak if it were forced upon them, and to prevent its extension, were deeply anxious to avoid a conflict if it were possible. Before, therefore, taking any active steps, they appealed to President Steyn to use his good offices to help them to avert bloodshed and Civil War.

Ex-President Steyn held a unique position in the Orange Free State. He had been President of the Free State—always a model little State—for some years before, and at the outbreak of the South African War. He had, though against the grain (for his country had no quarrel with the British Government), entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Transvaal; and when war came,

the Free State without hesitation implemented its undertaking and joined in the war to the full extent of its resources.

The strain of the war broke down the President's health ; but he had been able to take a distinguished part in the Convention at which Union came into being. He was now living a somewhat retired and invalid life on his farm "Onze Rust" near Bloemfontein, — an interesting personality, a pathetic figure.¹

The Government had previously been in correspondence with President Steyn in reference to Maritz's treachery ; and on October 11th definitely appealed to him to mediate and to use his influence with de Wet and Beyers. He complied with the request ; but being unable, in consequence of his enfeebled state of health to travel himself, he despatched his son, Dr. Colin Steyn, with instructions to deliver letters to the two Generals inviting them to come and see him at his house under safe-conduct.

But this well-meant effort came to nought, for neither de Wet nor Beyers availed themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them of bringing about a peaceful solution. De Wet, after first declaring he would come and see Steyn, procrastinated and delayed a meeting on one excuse or another, and finally declined to go at all. Beyers also, at first avoided a meeting ; and it was not until November 11th that he went to see the President ; but by then not only had fighting begun, but his Commandos had been dispersed, and he himself had retired from the Transvaal into the Free State—the time for negotiations had passed.

¹ President Steyn died in 1916.

On October 13th, the day after Martial Law had been proclaimed, a meeting was held at Kopjes in the Free State at which representatives of the Transvaal and of the Free State (including four Free State Members of Parliament), were present, to discuss the situation. The next day de Wet and Beyers met at Pretoria, and a few days later, on October 19th, the first overt act of revolt occurred.

Some of the Commandos who were to entrain at Treurfontein (a disturbed district in the Transvaal) for Potchefstroom on their way to the front against Maritz, declined to entrain, and rode away with the horses and rifles which had been supplied to them by the Government. On the same day a band of rebels attacked and captured a police post east of Pretoria. A few days later, on October 24th, a rebel force in the Free State occupied Heilbron, while in other parts trains were seized. The Rebellion had begun in earnest.

The position was one of very great anxiety and gravity. The Government who had been still hoping against hope that the necessity of putting down internal disaffection by force of arms would not arise, at once took prompt and active steps to provide for contingencies.

The Expedition just on the point of starting for Walfisch Bay, was for the time being postponed, mounted Commandos were called out and were concentrated in the Transvaal and in the Free State at various strategic positions, and other of the Defence Forces were sent to guard Johannesburg, Pretoria and similar vulnerable points.

By the 23rd instant two thousand men of the Defence Force had arrived at Pretoria—a danger spot—and were distributed in and around the town

and district to meet any attempted raid.¹ Within the next few days these forces were largely reinforced, and were posted at the various strategic points round the town and district.

Dutch and British Regiments commanded the approaches to Government House some two miles outside Pretoria, maxim detachments were encamped on the kopje just below, where they remained until the end of November.² Our riding on the veld was restricted to within sight of the patrols, as bands of mounted rebels were roving about; while our quiet, day and night, was disturbed by bugle calls, challenging sentries and 'the tramp of armed men.'

To a man of peace and of Quaker ancestry this was rather a startling introduction to his Governor Generalship. Indeed, I began to think that my tailor was not quite so far out in his estimate of South Africa as a sort of "Wild West," as I had at first somewhat scornfully been inclined to think, when I found that he had thoughtfully inserted a pistol pocket in all the trousers he had made for me!

Martial Law was stringently enforced throughout Pretoria. All firearms and ammunition had to be

¹ We had arranged to go for a picnic at "Silikaat's Nek"—about twelve miles from Pretoria in the Rustenburg district—just about this time; and happened to have fixed on the place where, and the day when the first rebel Commando came through on their way towards Pretoria. We received news of the outbreak just in time to put off our expedition.

² One evening in November a terrific thunderstorm took place. The iron-stone on the kopje below the house was twice struck by lightning within a second or two. Two of the pickets were killed instantaneously and nine were so badly injured that they had to be taken to Hospital.

I have seen—a magnificent sight—as many as six separate thunderstorms at the same time from the stoep at Government House, the view from which stretches over some seventy miles.

given up. No one could leave the Municipal area without a pass, and all persons coming into the town had at once to report themselves. No civilians could enter the town after 10 p.m. and everyone had to be indoors between 11 at night and 5 in the morning. Unauthorised meetings were prohibited, and anyone using seditious language or spreading alarmist reports was liable to be severely punished.¹

The position at that time was so alarming that the Cabinet came to the decision (22nd October), conveyed to me by the Prime Minister, that, in the event of matters assuming a graver aspect, it would probably be necessary for me, together with the greater part of the Cabinet, to leave for Cape Town, as there was serious danger, indeed a certainty as it was then thought, that the telegraph lines and railways would be cut. In the opinion of the Cabinet it was essential that the Governor General and the Government should remain in touch with the rest of the Union and with the Imperial Government. I informed the Prime Minister that the idea of leaving Pretoria was extremely distasteful to me personally; that I thought it would have a bad effect and at the worst possible moment, and only if the Government considered it imperative should I be prepared to consider the question further. Fortunately the crisis, instead of getting worse, began from that moment to mend, so that the question of leaving Pretoria did not again arise.

On October 26th the first public announcement was made that a Rebellion had broken out. The

¹ One of my Staff, constitutionally a pessimist and alarmist, was given a special permit by the Police allowing her to "use words calculated to create alarm or despondency" without making herself liable to be "severely punished."

public, who up to then had been only vaguely aware of what had been going on since Maritz's treachery, on learning the gravity of the position, experienced a shock even more severe than the announcement of Martial Law.

The Government had promised President Steyn that, while negotiations were proceeding, they would, as far as possible, avoid any provocative action. But as a measure of precaution they had gradually concentrated their forces at Kimberley Bloemfontein and Kroonstad in order to deal with the situation in the Orange Free State if, and when, the need for immediate action arose. They drew a cordon across a line North, West and South of Bloemfontein, and thus prevented the revolt from spreading west and south, and were able practically to confine the rising to the east and south-east of the Orange Free State.

Meanwhile Beyers and de Wet had taken advantage of the defensive inaction of the Government, and had been moving freely about in the Transvaal and the Free State respectively, commandeering men, horses, arms and stores, and occupying the railways.

The Government came, therefore, reluctantly to the conclusion that any further delay would only be taken as a sign of weakness, and that an armed conflict could not be avoided. A Cabinet was held on the 25th of October and it was decided to attack the rebels at once and energetically. After the Cabinet, Botha came to see me to tell me of the decision, and to inform me that he proposed to take command himself, and would start the following day against Beyers in the Transvaal.

The account of the military operations can be

compressed into a few lines. On October 26th General Botha himself took the field against Beyers; and, on the following day, in a running fight at Commissies Drift south of Rustenburg, dispersed his Commandos and captured some prisoners. Botha thereupon returned to Pretoria. A few days later Beyers made his way into the Free State; and, on November 7th, his Commandos were again badly defeated and scattered, and some four hundred prisoners were taken. Further skirmishes ensued, and about the end of November, Beyers, with some thirty to forty men attempted to make his way back into the Transvaal with a view to joining de Wet. But on the 8th of December he was again attacked, and whilst endeavouring to escape by fording the Vaal river, he fell from his horse and was drowned. His body was subsequently recovered.

Meanwhile in other parts of the Transvaal, in the Pretoria and Rustenburg districts especially, the rebel Commandos shewed some enterprise, and desultory and occasional sharp fighting took place. But superior forces told, and within a few weeks after the actual outbreak, the main body of the rebels were rounded up or hopelessly dispersed; and by December the Rebellion, as far as the Transvaal was concerned, was practically at an end.

III

The Rebellion in the Orange Free State was, at the beginning, and throughout, fraught with greater danger, and caused much more anxiety to the Government than the rising in the Transvaal.

Ever since the Peace of Vereeniging there had been some jealousy on the part of the Free State directed against the Transvaal; and the quarrel

between Botha and Hertzog in 1912 had accentuated this feeling. The great influence which Botha therefore possessed and could exercise in the Transvaal, did not extend to the Orange Free State ; while at the same time de Wet had far more personal influence in the Free State than Beyers had in the Transvaal.

There was moreover among those in the Free State a general feeling that the effect of Union had been rather to leave them out in the cold. Their representatives at the Convention had loyally and cordially supported the proposals for Union. But, unfortunately, experience of Union had been somewhat discouraging to the Free State. The citizens had a feeling that their State, of which they were so proud, had to some extent lost its identity ; and that under Union the Free State had become overshadowed by the Transvaal and the Cape, especially by the former. They felt that the personal and intimate relations which in the old days of the Republic, as well as under Responsible Government had subsisted between them and their President or Governor, their own Prime Minister and other Ministers had ceased under Union ; and, that, especially since the death of Mr. Fischer,¹ they had got out of touch, and the majority out of sympathy with the Union Government. A certain feeling of soreness and of neglect was prevalent, by no means confined to the 'rebel' section.

It was common knowledge therefore that the Orange Free State was much disaffected and a more fruitful ground for unrest and revolt than the

¹ The Right Hon. Abraham Fischer was the first Prime Minister of the O.F.S., and a Member of Botha's first Cabinet. He died in 1913.

Transvaal; and it was impossible to foresee to what extent this disaffection would crystallise into a general Rebellion in that Province, and how far it would be possible to confine it to a limited area.

The Government therefore delayed attack in the Orange Free State until the last possible moment, with an ever-fading hope that hostilities might be avoided. But on October 28th, de Wet made a Speech at Vrede at which, after detailing his grievances (which indeed appeared to be somewhat trivial) he declared that he intended to go through to join Maritz who would provide him with arms and ammunition, and that he then intended to go to Pretoria, pull down the British flag and proclaim a South African Republic. The last shred of hope of avoiding a conflict in the Orange Free State disappeared.

The first conflict between the Union forces and the rebels in the Free State took place on the 8th of November. On the 9th General Botha took command. On the 12th he vigorously attacked and severely defeated de Wet's forces at Mushroom Valley near Winburg, capturing his camp, waggon, and a considerable number of prisoners.

After his defeat at Mushroom Valley de Wet pursued his old tactics of the South African War evading direct attack, dispersing and then reappearing at some other point. But tactics that were successful under the conditions of that war, were now frustrated by the use of forces equally mobile, conversant with this particular mode of warfare and with the lie of the country. Skirmishes took place, and de Wet's forces gradually dwindled away.

About the middle of November he crossed into the Transvaal with a limited following, and from there

he passed into British Bechuanaland some twenty miles north of Vryburg. He was pursued, and his horses becoming exhausted, he was finally captured on December 2nd, with the aid of the motor detachment, the latest method of mobility.

The rebels in the field in the Free State were estimated at some 6,000 to 7,000 men, mostly mounted but badly armed. They were concentrated mainly in the north east in the districts round Vrede, Harrismith, Bethlehem, and Senekal. After de Wet's defeat, with a few exceptions, not much fight was shewn by the rebel Commandos, and they were gradually rounded up, dispersed or surrendered. The actual effective fighting in the Free State covered even a shorter period than it had in the Transvaal.

IV

From the moment that serious operations definitely began, both in the Transvaal and in the Free State, the rebel forces had little or no chance of success. Throughout the revolt the leaders never appeared to have any settled plan of campaign; there was no staff work, no co-operation, and apparently no definite objective. The Commandos were, for the most part, badly armed and short of horses, and, with some brilliant exceptions, put up but a feeble resistance and shewed no stomach for a fight.

Practically, from the very beginning of the active operations, in spite of a few checks or reverses, the Government forces were always in the ascendant, and the pressure on the rebels became continuously greater. After hostilities had actually begun, very few additional men joined the rebels, and each

skirmish by a process of attrition, reduced the numbers of those in the field.

The Government forces were so handled that superior numbers were almost always brought to bear, and their activity was so great, that the roving bands were never given a moment's rest and were gradually defeated in detail. One prisoner, indeed, complained bitterly "that for five consecutive nights he had not had a proper night's rest in consequence of being kept on the run."

South Africa, partly due to the altitude of some of the principal centres and the consequent effect on the nerves, has a great sense—of rumour. There is hardly a story, however extravagant and grotesque, which does not meet with credence and excite a considerable proportion of the population. This was especially the case during the War period. The rebels in the field were buoyed up by the most fantastic and contradictory reports. The Germans were in Paris and London; the Government Forces had been defeated; the Government were in sympathy with the rebels and wished them success; General Beyers was besieging Pretoria with German Artillery; the Government had resigned; the loyal Burghers were wavering and would soon join them.

But, to their dismay, the rebels soon found that General Botha and his Burghers were in the field against them; and, in the Free State, that Commandants like Brand, Reitz, and Manie Botha, instead of joining them as they had been told, were heading the Commandos against them. The discouragement of defeat was accentuated by severe disillusionment, and the rebels soon lost heart, and before long many of them either surrendered under the terms of the later Proclamation or dispersed to their farms.

The peaceable inhabitants of the districts in which active operations took place, had an unpleasant and anxious time. In the Orange Free State the towns and dorps were often successively occupied by the rebel Commandos and by the Government troops.¹

In anticipation of, and during the course of the Rebellion, the Government issued two Proclamations with the object, if possible, of inducing those who had come out to lay down their arms. On October 3rd, a Proclamation was issued calling on the disaffected Burghers to surrender arms and to go home without delay, in which case, with certain exceptions, no steps would be taken against them. A further Proclamation of a more serious tenor was issued on the 12th November. The Notice provided that any person in rebellion who, by November 21st, surrendered voluntarily with his rifle and went quietly home, and took no further part directly or indirectly in the Rebellion, would not be criminally prosecuted. The Amnesty, however, did not apply to persons who had taken a prominent or leading part in the Rebellion, or who had committed acts in violation of the rules of civilised warfare. The Notice went on to state that all rebels who failed to comply would be liable to be dealt with according to the rigour of the law, and that the private property of rebels, who did not voluntarily surrender under the terms of the Notice, would be liable to be charged with

¹ The Magistrate's Messenger in one dorp telephoned for instructions. "Where is the Magistrate?" he was asked. "The Magistrate has been captured and taken away by General de Wet." "Where is the Assistant Magistrate?" "Oh, he has been arrested and taken away by Colonel Manie Botha's Commando."

the direct loss and damage sustained by loyal and peaceable citizens. This Proclamation resulted in a considerable number of surrenders.

The active operations in the Transvaal began on October 28th, and in the Orange Free State on November 9th, and as a whole did not last more than five or six weeks. Within a few days of the opening of hostilities all danger had passed in the respective Provinces; and early in November the revolt had been reduced to such insignificant proportions that the postponed arrangements for sending the Oversea force to Walfisch Bay were again taken in hand. By the beginning of December, the whole affair was practically over; and, by the middle of that month, the fire was extinguished, and such embers as were still smouldering were soon stamped out.

It is estimated that some 12,000 to 13,000 men took part in the Rebellion. Some 6,000 were captured or surrendered in the field. The surrenders under the Amnesty Notices amounted to 3,900, and the rest, who were neither captured nor had surrendered, left their Commandos and went home, throwing away or hiding their arms.

The number of troops—apart from the garrisons or occupying forces at the Cape, Pretoria, Johannesburg and elsewhere—who were actively engaged in the operations amounted to some 30,000 men, of whom approximately 20,000 were of Dutch descent.

The total casualty list among the Government forces in the Transvaal and Orange Free State (exclusive of the casualties in the Cape Province due to Maritz's action, and fights with the Germans) amounted to 374—killed or died 132,

wounded 242—of whom, judging by their names, two-thirds at least were of Dutch extraction.

The known casualties on the rebel side were 190 killed and some 300 to 350 wounded. Thus the revolt cost well over three hundred lives.

It will be seen that the Rebellion was no slight affair and involved serious military operations. Certain it is that if the nettle had been less firmly grasped by the Government, or if the position had been less judiciously, promptly, and courageously handled, the whole complexion of the affair would have been altered and the position would have been very grave. If, moreover, the Commandants and the Commandos had shown any hesitation in taking the field against their compatriots (as they might well have done); or if Botha, unable or unwilling to rely on his burghers, had attempted to put down the revolt by forces for the most part British, the revolt would rapidly have gathered strength. If (which was quite feasible) Pretoria and Bloemfontein had at the beginning been captured by the rebels, or if there had been defeats or set backs, the Rebellion would have assumed most formidable proportions. The heather would have been alight, the conflagration would have spread rapidly, and would have been difficult to extinguish. But all went well, and the danger points were gradually passed.

It was providential also that the actual outbreak came at a moment favourable to the Government. Though they were to a certain extent taken by surprise, the preparations for the Expeditionary Campaign against German South West, had already resulted in the mobilization of a considerable force which they were able, at once, to utilize and to

reinforce. If, on the other hand, the outbreak had not taken place until a few weeks later, and when some 30,000 men, amongst the most loyal, had already been dispatched oversea to Luderitz and Swakopmund, the military difficulty of coping with the rising would have been enormously increased, and the Rebellion would have had a serious chance of initial success.

Though the Rebellion itself was completely suppressed, the position then and later was not altogether free from anxiety; and on two subsequent occasions—once in 1916 and once in 1918—the Government were greatly concerned at a recrudescence of unrest and the likelihood or possibility of further active trouble.¹ Indeed, the whole period of the War was naturally a time of great anxiety, especially when so many of the loyal burghers and others were out of the Country serving in German East Africa or Overseas.

¹ On the second occasion, in July 1918, we were in Camp on the Zambesi; and the state of affairs appeared to be so critical that we returned at once to Pretoria. The position was, however, promptly taken in hand by the Government, and the danger, such as it was, was averted.

PART II

CAUSES OF THE REBELLION

It has been necessary to give an account of the Rebellion itself in order fully to appreciate the great responsibility that fell upon General Botha and his Government during September, October and November of 1914.

But it would be unprofitable, or worse, nine years after the event, to rake up the ungracious past, and to endeavour to discuss or to estimate how far the actual Rebellion was deliberate and previously planned, or due to German intrigue ; or how far it was spontaneous, and developed from passive hostility into active resistance. No advantage would be gained, either, by attempting to allocate to the leaders their respective responsibilities or to proportion their degree of criminality.

In order to make the position clear, however, a few words must be said as to the origin of the Rebellion.

It is, I should imagine, beyond controversy that if the Great War, which brought the British Empire and Germany into armed conflict, had not come about, the Rebellion would never have taken place—incentive and opportunity would both have been lacking.

The opening of the War in Europe profoundly stirred South Africa and especially the European population of the Union. Of necessity the two

white races, the British-born (whether South African born or otherwise) and those of Dutch extraction viewed the conflict from a fundamentally different point of view.

The former, moved by indignation against Germany for what they believed to be an aggressive attack on her part, to the imminent peril of Great Britain and of Europe, and stimulated by their home ties, had no hesitation whatever in deciding on their action, and on the full support that they would give to the British Government and to the Empire.

The latter naturally viewed the question from a different point of view. They were not, they could not be actuated by the same sentiment of inborn loyalty and affection to the Imperial connection as the English, nor hold so deeply the feeling that an enemy of England was necessarily an enemy of their own; some indeed held the view that European quarrels were no concern of theirs.

Many had actual ties of blood, of descent or of kinship with Germany. Moreover at the time of the Raid, the German people and the German Government (though the Kaiser himself in the end proved a broken reed and a treacherous friend) had expressed their sympathy with the South African Republic. Subsequently, in the prolonged struggle against Great Britain, German Officers had assisted them in the field, and the German people had, through the Red Cross and in other ways, shown practical sympathy with the Burghers and their families. As President Steyn said to me, "My people here consider that they are under a debt of obligation to the German Race." Further the Dutch as a whole had a great admiration for the Germans as a

military nation, and many of them, perhaps most of them, were from the outset convinced that the Germans would be victorious.

This feeling in regard to Germany was not, however universal amongst the Dutch-speaking section. There were those who remembered that at the time of the South African War, as General Botha said publicly on one occasion, "Germany sat with folded arms in neutrality. Germany was looking on while the two Republics were being swallowed up, in fact co-operated to have the two Republics defeated. When I defeated the English troops at the Tugela it was the Kaiser who suggested that the English campaign should be through the Free State. The successful plans of campaign were proposed by no one but the Kaiser. And President Kruger was insulted on Germany's border and turned back."

It is probable, however, that if the European War alone had been in question, the protesters would hardly have found a sufficiently propitious opportunity or sufficiently solid ground for action. But, following close on its heels, came the suggestion by the British Government, and its prompt acceptance by the Union Government, of an Expedition to attack their neighbours in German South West—and this just at a moment when the War in Europe appeared to be going badly for the Allies.

The idea of an unprovoked attack as it appeared to them on German South West was at its inception unpopular with a considerable number of those of Dutch descent. It was looked upon as gratuitous and aggressive, and carrying with it no advantage to the Union; while the country itself was thought to be a desolate, sandy waste, not worth the sacrifice of men or money. The idea, the mistaken idea, more-

over, that compulsory commandeering would be enforced for the Campaign, was especially resented.

These contributory causes gave additional strength and substance to the agitation of the malcontents and brought the disaffection to a head. The agitation grew in strength, and gradually drifted, as such agitations almost always do, from professed moderation on the part of the leaders (whatever some of them might have had at heart) to extreme action. Protests and Resolutions rapidly developed into Rebellion and a declared struggle for Independence.

If the ideas of the leaders were confused and fluctuating, it is pretty safe to say that the bulk of the burghers who came out on Commando at the instigation of Beyers and de Wet, had no clear idea as to the motives that moved them nor of the objective they had in view. They trusted their leaders and were prepared to follow them blindly¹ and they were in many ways misled or self-deceived.

It is probable, moreover, that many of those, possibly the majority, who came out were not aware of the gravity of the offence they were committing. In Great Britain we have been free from armed revolt for over a hundred and fifty years. In South Africa turmoil, strife, and forcible action have been perennial; and the word "Rebellion" has not the same significance as in Great Britain.

Moreover, in South Africa in the old Republican days, in the Transvaal at least, it was not an infrequent custom for Adullamites, instead of retiring

¹ It appeared that some of those who obeyed the commandeering Notices signed by General Beyers were doubtful whether it was Beyers the Commandant-General or Beyers the Rebel who was commandeering them.

into a Cave and sulking and plotting there, to saddle the horse, seize rifle and bandolier, and ride into the Capital to demand redress from the Government; and this without any intention of upsetting the Constitution, still less of shooting or being shot at. It was, in fact, a primitive method of passing a Vote of Censure on the Government, who it was hoped would be coerced into crying out "don't shoot; we will come down."

This old idea of 'practical politics' probably accounted for the presence of a considerable number of the rebels who took the field, and who did not intend to commit, and indeed did not know that they were committing an act of rebellion, in our sense of the term. They thought that they could turn out the Government or even, indeed, that the Government were, or would be found to be on their side. Great was their surprise and disillusionment when they found themselves confronted in the field by their old Commandants and former comrades-in-arms, who they had been emphatically informed had either given up the game, or would at the proper moment actively join in their protest.

That the revolt was not taken very seriously by some of those who took part in it may be shown by quoting a case or two which came under my notice. The wife of a Major in the Defence Force who had joined the rebels, applied for part of his pay on a "stop order." The Defence Department naturally objected to paying as the Officer was out in rebellion. The wife was indignant and said that her husband's private affairs had nothing to do with her, and that they must pay.

Certain of the teachers in the Transvaal deserted their schools and joined the rebels. More than

one of them wrote to the Director of Education in the Transvaal to express regret that they had been absent, and to ask him to be good enough to allow them to deduct the time they had been absent from subsequent leave. One of the Railway men left his work and joined the rebels, and wrote to say that he had taken with him three cases of petroleum and would be glad if they would stop it out of his pay.

But, whatever may have been the reason, motive, object or belief that in divers ways influenced those who took the field, and however much they were misled by their leaders or self-misled, the movement eventually developed into a definite armed revolt against constituted Authority, which, if it had had any success at the beginning, would have led to a general Civil War, mainly racial.

PART III

BOTHA AND THE REBELLION

WHEN the first overt acts in the Transvaal which eventually resolved themselves into an armed rising occurred, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence (Smuts) and all the Cabinet were away at Cape Town in order to receive the new Governor General, and to be present at the opening of the Special Session of Parliament. Thus, at a very critical moment, the Government were, for a time, completely out of touch with the position and feeling in the Transvaal, as well as in the Orange Free State.

At the moment that the Ministers had left Pretoria, the mutterings of discontent and the feelings of unrest seemed to have passed away; and they not unnaturally thought that the endorsement by Parliament of the action which the Government had taken in reference to the War, and on which they believed they could count, would strengthen and consolidate their position.

Their absence from Pretoria at the time was certainly most inopportune. But for the absence of the Prime Minister and the other Ministers from the administrative Capital, events might have, and almost certainly would have taken a very different course.

If General Smuts had been on the spot, the in-

trigues set on foot at Potchefstroom and elsewhere could hardly have taken place without his becoming aware of them. If General Botha had been in Pretoria in the early stages of the affair, it is almost certain that the persuasiveness and sternness which he knew so well how to combine, would have prevented or at least delayed the resignation of General Beyers. It is probable that at that time Beyers neither foresaw nor intended the results which followed from his action. The treacherous activities would thus have been nipped in the bud, and the whole course of events would have been changed.

But General Botha and his Colleagues were a thousand miles away at the critical moment ; and, in their absence, the first fatal steps were taken, and one tragic event followed another.

General Botha and his Cabinet were faced with as difficult and painful a task as ever fell to the lot of Statesmen ; but from the moment that they became aware of the gravity of the position they had no hesitation as to the steps they should take.

General Botha (as he often explained to me) held that the action of the rebels was directed not only against the British connection, which he felt himself bound in honour to defend, but was a clear case of treachery against the Act of Union itself—the Solemn League and Covenant of the Four Provinces themselves. He further felt that he, as Prime Minister, and his Government, were under a special obligation to the Imperial Government to maintain peace and good order in the Union, inasmuch as they had voluntarily and spontaneously, at the beginning of the war, informed the British Government that the Imperial Troops could safely be with-

drawn for service elsewhere, and that they would hold themselves responsible for the safety and the defence of the Union.

From the first, however, the Government were determined to avoid any step which could be held to give an excuse for hostile action by the other side. Before actual hostilities began, and when Generals Beyers and De Wet, were moving about the country with bands of armed followers stirring up agitation and fanning revolt, no attempt was made to arrest them, as it was anticipated that such action might give an excuse for armed resistance and might precipitate an outbreak.

The Government, moreover, as we have seen, before resorting to actual hostilities endeavoured to enlist and to utilize the great influence of President Steyn in favour of a peaceful settlement. Active operations were delayed in order to give the Steyn negotiations a fair chance of success. When it became clear, however, that forbearance was being misunderstood, and that the inactivity of the Government Forces was not only encouraging the rebels and discouraging the loyal section, but was being utilised to strengthen the position of the leaders of the revolt, the Government struck promptly and struck hard.

The Prime Minister was from the very beginning determined to prevent at any cost a Civil War, if it unfortunately came to that, from developing on racial lines, with all the disastrous consequences which would ensue. He had made up his mind that if it became necessary to use force he would, in the first instance, and as far as possible, deal with the revolt by means of his own Burgher Commandos rather than depend upon those sections

of the Defence Force in which the British element preponderated.

Apart, therefore, from the Regiments utilized for the garrison of Cape Town and the defence of Pretoria, Johannesburg and elsewhere, or in the operations directed against Maritz, the main operations against the rebels, were undertaken by the Burgher troops under Dutch-speaking Commandants; and the chief casualties were amongst those bearing Dutch names.

For the same reasons he desired also as far as possible to put down the Free State rising by loyal Free State Burghers under the command of men like George Brand,¹ son of Sir John Brand, the former greatly respected President, Denys Reitz, son of an Ex-President, Manie Botha and Louis Botha the sons of General Botha's eldest brother who was killed during the Boer War fighting under de Wet, and Cronje a relative of General Cronje. All these four had fought through the South African War. It was subsequently found that larger forces were required than could be supplied from the Free State itself, and other commandos and troops were brought in from elsewhere.

Botha fully realised the risk that he ran in taking up this attitude, and in commandeering the Dutch-speaking section of the Defence Force for service in the field against the rebels. Even the most stalwart of the Commandants and of the Burghers might well have pleaded that, while they were quite loyal to the Crown and to the British connection and would do their best to maintain it, it was putting too severe and too painful a strain upon them to ask them actually to go out into the field against,

¹ Subsequently Major General. Died December 1922.

and to shoot down those who, for the most part, were relations, friends or neighbours, and men with whom they had fought side by side against the British only a few years before.

Botha was intensely gratified, and his anxiety was relieved when, with scarcely an exception, one and all of his old Commandants and comrades-in-arms loyally accepted the attitude he had taken up and followed him without hesitation.

Again, it was clear to Botha that he himself should take command, first against Beyers, then against De Wet, and subsequently in the Upington district. After what had occurred and the rumours that were current, it appeared essential that it should be made perfectly clear to the Country and to the rebels, at once and decisively, that the Government themselves were determined at all costs to put down the revolt and would have no truck with treason. As he said to a friend: "It is my duty, and it is the only thing for me to do. Beyers and de Wet are strong men and have a big following in the country. There is no one else I can put in their place just now, so I must go myself." Further, he felt that he could, with greater force, appeal to his fellow Commandants and Burghers to undertake the painful duty imposed upon them if he did not shrink from the task himself.

On three separate occasions he took the field against the rebels, and his action in so doing had a material effect by encouraging his own people, in giving confidence to the Country, and proportionately discouraging the rebels.

At the same time, while himself taking the field, and determined absolutely to suppress the revolt, he desired to carry out his object with as little actual

fighting and as few casualties as possible on either side, preferring to attain his end, if he could, by surrounding, dispersing and capturing the rebels rather than by forcing them to fight. This object he was able to a large extent to accomplish by his masterly tactics and by bringing overwhelming forces to bear against the rebels in detail. "My orders," he said, in his evidence before the Commission of Enquiry, "when I took the field and endeavoured to capture Beyers, were that the rebels were to be scattered and captured—let the rebels fire first."

On most occasions, indeed, the rebels showed but little fight, dispersing on a show of force. "It is clear," General Botha wrote to me, at an early stage, "that the spirit of the rebels is utterly broken, and it is almost pitiable to see them run, notwithstanding all the brave preparations for a fight made by them in the vicinity of Reitz. I am sure the demonstration of force in these parts has practically crushed the rebellion in the Free State." When, however, as occasionally happened, the rebels stood their ground and put up an effective fight, they were vigorously attacked, as the casualties on both sides showed. The Rebellion was, as a matter of fact, put down with great promptness and efficiency, and in a very short space of time.

This policy of forbearance was severely criticised or condemned by certain sections of the community who would have preferred that the rebels should be shot down rather than rounded up.

But on a calm consideration of the matter, it can hardly be denied that Botha was not only fully justified by the result, but that he took the

natural, humane and statesmanlike view of the position.

He could not forget, and his Government, mainly a Government of Dutch extraction, could not forget that the fight was a fratricidal conflict, and they could not ignore the fact that for the loyal Burghers who took the field, it was as Botha said "an unhappy and indeed tragic ordeal to have to hunt down and fire on men, many of them relatives and many of them friends who were once their comrades-in-arms." It was natural and right, therefore, that the Leader, his Officers and his men should prefer to attain their end by dispersing or capturing rather than by bloodshed and casualties.

PART IV

TREATMENT OF THE REBELS

THE final suppression of the Rebellion did not end the responsibilities nor the anxieties of the Prime Minister and of his Government.

The very difficult and delicate question of the treatment of the rebels—of the rank and file and of the leaders respectively—at once arose. It had to be decided what steps should be taken to impress the former with a due sense of the gravity of the action they had taken, and what punishment should be meted out to the latter.

There was, moreover, the further question of how best to compensate those who had remained loyal and who had suffered from the Rebellion. This last point was dealt with by the appointment of a Commission in January 1915 to deal with the question of compensation for those who had suffered from raiding or looting or in other ways at the hands of the rebels, and to assess the damages. Claims for compensation were confined to those who had shown by their action that they had remained loyal to the Government.

From the beginning the view of the Government, which was generally in accordance with public opinion, was that adequate punishment should be meted out to the leaders who had brought about the rising; and that the rank and file, while not

escaping scot free, should be dealt with leniently, especially those who had surrendered under the Proclamation of November 12th and previously.

“While we must do our duty in seeing that never again shall there be a recurrence of this criminal folly,” declared General Botha in his Manifesto of December 10th, 1914, issued after the Rebellion was crushed, “let us be on our guard against all vengeful policies and language, and cultivate a spirit of tolerance, forbearance and merciful oblivion of the errors and misdeeds of those misguided people, many of whom took up arms against the State without any criminal intention or without any clear perception of the consequences of their action. While just and fair punishment should be meted out, let us also remember that now more than ever it is for the people of South Africa to practise a wise policy of forgive and forget.”

It was thought by some that the Prime Minister had laid too much stress on “forgive and forget,” and too little stress on the necessity of adequate punishment for rebellion. But, as he explained later, he had no intention of suggesting a general amnesty for the rebels, and while he had sounded “a warning against conduct or language of a vindictive nature, those who undertook Rebellion must realise that it was a serious crime.”

His own feeling in the matter was described in a speech that he made at Pretoria on December 20th, 1914. “For myself personally (he said), the last three months have provided the saddest experience of all my life. I can say the same for General Smuts, and, indeed for every member of the Government. The war—our South African War—is but a thing of yesterday. You will understand my feelings, the

feelings of loyal Commandos, when among the rebel dead and wounded, we found from time to time men who had fought in our ranks during the dark days of that campaign. The loyal Commandos have had a hard task to perform. They have performed it, and the cause of law and order has been and will be vindicated. Let that be enough. This is no time for exultation or for recrimination. Let us spare one another's feelings. Remember we have to live together in this land long after the war is ended."

At first the general view was that, as regards the rank and file, the most suitable punishment for the offence would be disfranchisement for a certain period of time. It was recollected, however, that when Lord Milner had proposed the disfranchisement of the Cape rebels during the South African War, the Cape Bond Members had strongly opposed such a policy, and the proposal could hardly be revived even under different conditions. It was moreover thought, and rightly, that it would hardly be fair or expedient for the Government to disfranchise a large section of their political opponents.

It was finally decided, therefore, to disqualify and not to disfranchise those who were not brought to trial (except those who had come in under the first Amnesty Proclamation who were exempted from penalty). They were accordingly disqualified for ten years from being Members of Parliament or members of any Provincial Council or Local Body, and from being employed in any capacity by the Government, Provincial Council or Public Body, in the Public Service, in the Railway and Harbour Services, in the Defence Department, or in any public capacity whatever. They were also prohibited from holding a licence to possess arms and ammunition.

Apart from the leaders, some five thousand of the rebels were in prison when the Rebellion was finally suppressed. Five hundred of these were, for various reasons, released almost at once ; the others were released early in 1915 after the passing of the Martial Law Indemnity Act, but were, of course, subject to the disqualifications already mentioned.

As regards the Leaders, a Special Court was appointed in May 1915 for their trial, and some 280 cases were brought before the Court. Of these, most of whom were tried for High Treason, some were acquitted, about a hundred and seventy were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, and the remainder were fined and bound over to be of good behaviour.¹

As the country gradually settled down, the Government were anxious to carry out their policy of conciliation and clemency, believing that such action would have a good effect in healing the wounds and bringing about more friendly relations between the various sections of the people.

In the Governor General's speech at the opening of the new Parliament in November 1915, reference was made to the matter, and a hope was expressed that the general condition of the Country might enable the Government to consider the sentences passed by the Courts in the High Treason cases, with a view to determining, in the light of the special facts and circumstances of each individual case, and with due regard to the public safety, whether they would be justified in recommending the exercise of clemency in any specific case.

The first batch of prisoners, 119 in all, were

¹ De Wet was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and a fine of £2,000 ; Kemp to seven years' and a fine of £1,000.

released on parole in January 1916. They consisted of those who had been sentenced to the shorter terms of imprisonment, two years' or less—the "small potatoes" as Botha called them.

At the same time, however, General de Wet was also released. He was an old man, and was suffering from the confinement, and Botha and his colleagues were naturally anxious, as far as they could, to deal leniently with their former comrade-in-arms and with a man of de Wet's reputation. He was prepared to sign the undertaking of good conduct which was required from those who had been convicted and were released, the conditions being that during the unexpired portion of their term or for the duration of the War, whichever was the longer, they should take no part in political matters, nor attend any public meetings nor quit their district without leave.

A second batch numbering 27, which included the "prophet," were released in May 1916, and a few odds and ends were released at various times. This left some 18 of the principal leaders still in prison; and, in November, the Government came to the conclusion that these men also should be released. There is an old Dutch proverb, which President Steyn quoted to me on one occasion à propos of the release of the prisoners generally, "What is the use of swallowing the cow and leaving its tail still sticking out?" Some objection was taken to the release of two or three of those whose offence had been especially heinous, but the Government, having the proverb in mind, and with the hope that final leniency might have a good effect and diminish bitterness of feeling, decided to make no further distinction, and released all the remaining prisoners.

Thus within two years of the end of the Rebellion, all the leaders as well as the rank and file had been released on an undertaking of good conduct.

The men and Officers who had mutinied with Maritz were dealt with under a special Martial Law Order of January 1915. The Court of Enquiry reported that there was some palliation for the conduct of a large proportion of the Officers and men who had gone into Rebellion under Maritz, for it appeared that they had been overawed by Maritz and were not necessarily actuated by rebellious or treasonable motives. They were, therefore, allowed to return to their homes and stay there on good behaviour, but were subject to the disqualifications applied to the other rebels. The Officers and those of other ranks who had mutinied with treasonable purpose, were brought to trial.

In the Governor General's Speech at the opening of Parliament in January 1919, it was announced that, on the Proclamation of Peace, the disqualifications and disabilities which had been imposed on "those persons who were concerned in the Rebellion of 1914," some 8,000 or 9,000 in all, would be removed. The Second Reading of the Amnesty Bill was taken on the 19th March and came into force on the Proclamation of Peace on July 10th 1919. "No objection (I wrote to the Secretary of State) was taken to the Bill on the part of any section. It was obviously the right thing to do on the conclusion of Peace."

CHAPTER V

THE GERMAN SOUTH WEST CAMPAIGN

I

BEFORE the War, the Union was the only Dominion which had a frontier conterminous with that of a European Power—Portugal on the North East, Germany on the West.

The aim and object of the German South West Campaign, undertaken at the request of the Imperial Government, has already been explained; but before giving an account of the Campaign, it is necessary to say something in regard to the genesis of "German South West."

This Territory formerly vaguely called "Damara-land," is as large as the Transvaal and Orange Free State put together. It is divided from Union Territory on the south by the Orange River, and on the north touches the Portuguese Territory of Angola. On the east a purely arbitrary line, drawn as it were with a ruler, divides it from Bechuana-land. The coast-line runs south to north from the mouth of the Orange River to the mouth of the Cunene River.¹ The first sixty or eighty miles of hinterland is a waterless sand-belt, succeeded by a

¹ The Country also includes on the N.E. the narrow strip of territory called the "Caprivi Strip" (also with purely artificial boundaries) which under agreement with the British Government gave G.S.W. access to the Zambesi. The Strip itself is for the most part marshy, and abounds in big game.

broad strip of waterless rocky country. Along the thousand miles of storm-beaten inhospitable coast, there were but two harbours : the small harbour of Angra Pequena, as it was originally called,¹ and Walfisch Bay, the latter a fine natural and well-protected harbour, which due expenditure of money would convert into an excellent Port.

Lack of foresight and imagination, procrastination and the desire to limit responsibilities, lost the Territory to the Empire ; and, what was worse, brought in Germany as a focus of intrigue, and an uneasy neighbour to the British possessions in South Africa.

Until the beginning of the Eighties, the whole country was regarded as under British influence ; and, in 1878, the Imperial Government were reluctantly persuaded by Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of the Cape, formally to annex Walfisch Bay and the adjacent islands, together with some fifteen miles inland of sandy hinterland ; and the whole was handed over to the Cape Colony. The rest of the country was not effectively occupied by the British Government ; and, in 1880, with the exception of Walfisch Bay, all British Officials were withdrawn from Damaraland.

German traders and Missionaries gradually established themselves along the coast ; and, in 1882, the German Government formally asked the British Government what authority they exercised in the Territory, and what protection they could afford to a commercial undertaking about to be established on the coast. An evasive reply was sent ; and,

¹ Since the German occupation known as Lüderitzbucht, after Herr Lüderitz, who under Official auspices hoisted the German flag there in 1883.

thereupon, in 1883, Angra Pequena was occupied by a German commercial expedition. Finally, some forty years ago, the Imperial Government and the Cape Government woke up one morning, to discover that, with the exception of Walfisch Bay, the whole country from Cape Colony to the Portuguese boundary had been annexed by Germany.

Walfisch Bay, which alone remains, has no water-supply, and its hinterland consists of a few square miles of sand. No attempt was made to utilise or develop it, and the pride of the British Empire was in 1914 represented by a few corrugated tin shanties and a whaling station.

The Germans, having taken possession of the country, desired to develop it as a Colony, and naturally cast envious eyes on Walfisch Bay. They must, and with considerable justification, have perpetually anathematized the dog-in-the-manger policy of Great Britain in keeping in her hands the one accessible harbour on the coast, making no use of it whatever herself, and denying it to Germany, thus placing great and costly difficulties in the way of the development of the only White man's Colony that the Germans had acquired.

The German attempts to obtain Walfisch Bay by negotiations were providentially frustrated. In their hands it would unquestionably have become an effective harbour and a great Naval and submarine base ; a German menace, which, when war came, would have materially affected the whole position of affairs in the Southern Hemisphere, and influenced the War itself.

But though the Germans were denied the use of Walfisch Bay, they were not to be deterred by difficulty nor cost from developing their newly

acquired place in the sun—and sand. With the small harbour at Luderitz and the open and wind-swept roadstead at Swakopmund as their only sea bases, they constructed, with lavish expenditure, on a foundation of deep and shifting sand, two well-built towns with fine official buildings.

From thence they extended their operations. From Luderitz and Swakopmund respectively, they constructed two branch lines of railway into the interior, crossing the sandy, rocky and waterless belt. Later, the main railway line, partly commercial in the North, mostly strategic in the Centre and South, was built, running north to south and linking up the coast connections ; the whole some 1,200 miles in length. The town of Windhuk, the capital, was built, and there the most powerful long-range wireless station in the world was constructed. The Country was developed and other towns of lesser importance were laid out.

At the beginning of March 1915 accompanied by General Thompson, the Imperial G.O.C. in the Union, I paid a visit to Luderitz, Walfisch Bay and Swakopmund, and to the troops at the various Fronts. At the time I was there the troops had not penetrated beyond the sandy belt. At Luderitz they had got as far as Garub and a little beyond, from which Aus and its position of strength could be clearly seen and realised.

I wrote an account of my visit which was printed for the information of the British Cabinet, and from it I may quote a description of the country.

“ The eighty miles of country from Luderitz to Aus is rainless desert, and endless sand as far as the eye can reach, with undulating sand-hills, dunes

and boulders. There are hills around Aus and elsewhere some six or seven hundred feet high. The country, except for the complete absence of any vegetable life, is somewhat picturesque, with the hills in the distance. As far as eye could see not a green blade nor a bird was visible, though a few small antelopes somehow manage to exist.

“ The first part of the journey, is through a district of enormous sandheaps, which are perpetually shifting in size and situation as the wind drifts the sand from one place to the other. In certain parts the railway is constantly being blocked by the shifting sand. The Germans (and we have followed their example) endeavoured to prevent the sand from shifting and blocking the railway by pegging down immense sheets of canvas on the windward side of the nearest sand-dunes.

“ Further inland, though the sand is still deep and perpetual, it is broken by kopjes and rocks, great and small, fixed and loose, with a few brown scrub plants half hidden by the sand.

“ Luderitz itself is quite a respectable-sized little town, well laid out, with good and substantially built houses, German of course in style and decoration. The town was left absolutely intact when it was evacuated and occupied last September, and everything—furniture, bedding, ornaments, pictures, books, etc.—was left in the houses. The harbour, though small, is fairly well protected from the sea. The town is built on sand, with the result that the streets, in spite of considerable expenditure by the Germans, possess few pavements and no foundations, and are ankle deep in loose sand. A narrow-gauge tramway runs down the principal streets to facilitate the carriage of goods in the town. There is a

well-built Church, barracks, a good Government House, and other official buildings and residences, as well as a considerable number of shops and dwelling-houses."

As regards Swakopmund, I noted that: "the country from Swakopmund to the temporary rail-head is flat and less picturesque and interesting than the more broken country at Luderitzbucht. The sand is harder and drifts less, and the terrible shifting sand-dunes are absent. In the distance there are hills. Like Luderitz, however, it is rainless desert and sand. The wind-driven sand is very irritating to face and hands."

"Swakopmund itself is very much on a par with Luderitz, but more considerable in size. Good, and well-constructed houses; shops, with several cafés and 'bierhallen.'; a Rathaus and Government Buildings, one of which is now used by the (Union) Headquarters Staff, and another as the residence of the G.O.C. The Church, barracks, hospital, wireless station, etc., are well built. There is a rather fine bronze monument, with much life about it, erected to the soldiers who fell in the Herrero War. The streets, like those of Luderitz, are of heavy sand, though in parts there is a side pavement; and there is a light street tramway. . . .

"The point that struck me most was the great enterprise which the Germans have shown in the development of Swakopmund and Luderitz—the former with only an open roadstead at its back, neither with any suitable water supply—and in the construction of railways into the interior through the rainless belt of eighty to a hundred miles. They had to make bricks with but little straw, and they have made a successful enterprise out of very un-

promising materials. The amount of money spent by them at Swakopmund, Luderitz, Windhuk and in German South West Africa generally, must have been something enormous."

It is evident from what we now know, that the German Government had in their mind not only the occupation, settlement and development of the country they had acquired, but something much beyond that. It is abundantly clear that German South West, in the event of a war, was to be used as a German base directed against a British Dominion. The railway lines, where they approached the Union, were designed for strategic purposes, and were admirably adapted for attack or defence.

The German South West Campaign also brought to light the fact that there was in the country a great accumulation of munitions of war; guns by the score, rifles by the thousand, and ammunition by the million, far in excess of any conceivable requirements for defensive purposes, for arming the Europeans in the Territory, or for use against the unarmed natives.

It was also a curious and significant fact that for some years before the War the personnel and activities of the German Consul-General in Cape Town were out of all proportion to those of the other Consulates or to Germany's actual interests in the Union; and there can be little doubt now that the Germans had, before the War, been carrying on an assiduous anti-British propaganda in the Union, and had been engaged in acquiring information military and political.

It is some satisfaction to know that South Africa was one of the greatest disappointments and disillusionments of the German Government, and a

signal proof of their want of comprehension of the mentality of others. "We expected that British India would rise. We expected trouble in Ireland. We expected a triumphant Rebellion in South Africa. We anticipated that the British Empire would be torn to pieces." ¹

One thing at least they never dreamt would occur; namely, that the three men who took the largest part in wresting from them their two South African Colonies—German South-West and German East—would be men bearing the names of Botha, Smuts and van Deventer.

It may be that from the political point of view, the Union Government would have been in a stronger position if, instead of undertaking the operations against German South West immediately after War broke out, they had been able to remain on the defensive until either the Germans had invaded Union territory or public opinion had gradually come round to the necessity of an advance.

As we have seen, General Botha and his Government considered it their duty, at the urgent request of the Imperial Government, to undertake the expedition against German South West at the very beginning of the War.

But whether this were expedient or no, it was morally certain that operations against their German neighbours would sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, have been inevitable. As the war went on, the position would have become intolerable, and peace could not have been kept for long on the frontier when elsewhere the British Empire and Germany were at War with one another. Meanwhile, the German menace, aggravated by active

¹ *Der Tag*, April 26th, 1915.

intrigues would have crippled the activities of South Africa and prevented the Union from taking the share it did in the Great War, either Overseas or in German East.

II

The initial steps that were taken immediately after the outbreak of War in August 1914, for the preparation of a campaign against German South West have already been described. Two land Forces were made ready to operate from the south and south east ; Luderitz was occupied early in September, and the preparations for an Expedition to Swakopmund were far advanced.

It has also been shown how Maritz's treachery, the disaster to the Southern Force, and the dangerous state of affairs which had developed in the Transvaal and the Free State, rendered it necessary, at the beginning of October, abruptly to defer the Campaign. The Southern Land Force remained on the defensive ; while the South Eastern Force, which under Maritz had deserted to the Germans, was replaced by loyal troops who occupied Upington.

The first portion of the Oversea Force which had been despatched from Cape Town under Colonel Beves in September, had occupied Luderitz without resistance, and General Mackenzie had taken over the command on October 4th. They were not to attack however until the general advance took place simultaneously from the four different quarters. For six months, therefore, from September 1919 till March of the following year, the unfortunate troops panting " to be up and at 'em " had to kick their heels in the hot desolate town of Luderitz ankle deep in sand ; or, further afield, to camp out in tents

amidst sand-dunes and an open waste of drifting, stinging sand, enduring great heat and an occasional bomb from an aeroplane.¹

The operations against the rebels were so speedily successful that, by the beginning of November, it had become clear that the back of the Rebellion was broken, and that it would only be a matter of a comparatively short time before the rebel forces were dispersed or rounded up. The German South West Campaign was, therefore, again taken in hand in earnest.

But then came another unexpected delay due to an alarming cause. Admiral Cradock's Squadron was sunk by Admiral von Spee off Coronel at the beginning of November. It was anticipated that the possible, indeed the probable objective of von Spee would be South Africa and that he might take a hand, and a very unpleasant hand, in the contemplated operations.

Near the end of November Ministers, who had meanwhile been making their preparations, informed the Imperial Government that they would be in a position to dispatch the first portion of the Oversea Expedition to Walfisch Bay on December 2nd, as well as to reinforce the troops at Luderitz, if the Naval Commander-in-Chief could arrange for convoy and undertake the protection of the communications. The Admiral, however, was unable to guarantee the safe convoy of the Expedition to Walfisch Bay until the whereabouts of the German Squadron was definitely known and it had been dealt with.


¹ There was later some controversy between the troops stationed at Luderitz and those who subsequently went to Swakopmund, as to whether the peculiar formation and activity of the sand was more trying at the one place than the other.

The delay was, however, of short duration for von Spee's luck had turned. His attack on the Falkland Islands happened, unfortunately for him, to coincide with the presence there of a reinforced British Squadron who, themselves ignorant of the proximity of the German Squadron, were coaling with the intention of proceeding to the Chilian coast to find the German Admiral.

The sinking of the German Cruisers on December 8th removed the only remaining serious obstacle to the oversea operations against German South West ; and, on December 21st, the first part of the Expedition to Walfisch Bay sailed from Cape Town, escorted by the Naval Commander-in-Chief Admiral King-Hall.

The plan of campaign for the deferred Expedition was very much on the lines of the original scheme, only on a larger and more effective scale. Though the Rebellion, which caused the original postponement of the campaign was a very regrettable incident, the delay itself which was thereby caused was a very real advantage. The original preparations, and the mapping out of the campaign, had been carried out hurriedly under great pressure of time, with but meagre information, and without proper opportunity for training, organization or staff work. The total force with which, in the first instance, it had been intended to carry out the operations, amounted to no more than 9,000 men, almost entirely Infantry, who were to be reinforced later by another 9,000 men, about half of whom were to be mounted. The number of field-guns available was very inadequate, and not well distributed, and there were no big guns then available.

The deficiency of rifles was especially serious.



After provision had been made for the arming of the first Expedition, the unlooked for necessity of arming the men called out for the suppression of the Rebellion completely exhausted the stock of rifles. On October 21st the Union Government applied urgently to the Secretary of State for 10,000 stands of service rifles with a proportionate amount of ammunition.

They were informed that it was impossible for the Home Government to spare any rifles or ammunition, as they were very short of both themselves. But Mr. Harcourt (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) with great promptitude and energy, scoured Europe for rifles; and within a week secured, and a few days after dispatched, 20,000 Portuguese mauser rifles with ten million rounds of ammunition. The Union Government expressed "their profound gratitude for the way in which their request for rifles was met so effectively and promptly."

The Imperial Government also provided in September and October from various quarters, guns and maxims, sent also heavy Artillery from Malta, and freed as well for active service some of the defensive guns at Cape Town and Simonstown.

I confess that I was greatly disturbed at the time, that is early in September (as my Notes, and letters to the Secretary of State shew) and had grave doubts as to the certainty of the success of the operations, and was especially concerned at the deficiency in guns. A certainty of success was a very material element in the whole position. A check or set-back, especially in the case of the over-sea Expedition, still more a serious reverse, which in the circumstances might easily have happened, would have had grave consequences in the Union.

It would have justified the loyal, though reluctant Jeremiahs in saying "I told you so," while those who had been actively opposing the Campaign would have had a fruitful field for the denunciation of the Government and all its works.

But the re-constituted Expedition was a formidable force, and the whole affair was carried through from beginning to end without a check.

Incidentally, also, the delay had familiarised the Country with the idea of a campaign against German South West, and its unpopularity had greatly diminished by the time that operations could again be undertaken. Then, again, the men who had been in the field against the rebels were now willing to undertake German South West as well; and the mounted Burghers especially, who would have gone with reluctance in September were keen to go in December.¹

The announcement made that General Botha, who was to take the supreme Command, would himself go to Swakopmund, to which front the largest number of troops and especially of mounted Burghers were about to be sent, increased the popularity of the Campaign and the confidence of the public.

The advantage and wisdom of this step became ever more and more apparent as the Campaign proceeded. The presence of General Botha gave great satisfaction to the men, while any jealousy between the Officers was avoided. General Botha, in writing to me from the front to explain that he would not be able to get back as soon as he had

¹ Col. (subsequently Brig. General) Manie Botha raised a Mounted Brigade from the Free State numbering about 2,300, of whom 1,400 were Dutch and 900 English, all volunteers.

expected, said : " The plain fact of the situation is there is no-one available to be placed in Supreme Command except myself, who would have the full confidence of both sections, English and Dutch, of which our troops are composed."

The Rebellion had been a good training-ground for Staff work and a useful experience for the Defence Department ; and, the two months' enforced interval gave time for more careful preparation and training, for more thorough staff work and co-operation and personal contact between the Commanders and their Officers and men. It gave time also for a more mature consideration of the plan of campaign, and the acquisition of a more accurate knowledge of the country in which the operations were to take place ; besides enabling better equipment and more efficient transport and commissariat to be provided.

Thanks also to the prompt and liberal assistance, already mentioned, given by the Imperial Government at considerable inconvenience to themselves and to the effective co-operation of the Naval Commander-in-Chief and the Military G.O.C., the number of guns available, large and small, rifles and ammunition had been very materially increased.

III

The general plan of campaign was dictated by the Port and Railway system that the Germans had constructed ; and, owing to the sandy nature of the country, the operations, so far as the Infantry were concerned had to be based on the railways, at least until they had penetrated beyond the sand belt.

From the harbour of Luderitz and the roadstead

of Swakopmund ran respectively a line of railway inland linking up with the main Central Railway, which ran like a backbone almost due north and south. The junction of the Swakopmund line with the Central Railway was at Karibib, a distance of about a hundred and twenty miles, and the junction of the Luderitz line was at Seeheim, with the important centre of Keetmanshoop close by, some two hundred miles from Luderitz. The northern portion of the line from Karibib onwards tended north east, and reached the copper districts of Otavi and Tsumeb, and the fertile country round Grootfontein. From Karibib southwards the main line passed through Windhuk the capital (about eighty miles away and nearly due East of Walfisch Bay) and continued to within sixty miles of the border of the Cape Province, where it was left "in the air." Near railhead was the fort and arsenal of Kalkfontein as its defence—or jumping off ground.

Four separate forces were engaged in the Campaign, two Land Forces and two Oversea Forces.

The Southern Force under the Command of Colonel van Deventer based on Upington, was to advance from the South across the Orange River. Its first objective was Kalkfontein, and the main objective the capture of Keetmanshoop. The Eastern force under Colonel Berrange, was based on Kuruman. It was to cross the Kalahari Desert to Rietfontein on the border, and then to converge also on Keetmanshoop.

The Central Force, an Oversea Expedition, under General Sir Duncan Mackenzie, was already in occupation at Luderitz. Their first objective was the stronghold of Aus about eighty miles from Luderitz. Aus captured, they were to get astride the main central railway line north of Keet-

manshoop. It was believed that Aus was strongly held, and it was thought that the pass between the hills was commanded by heavy guns.

The Northern Force, the other oversea Expedition, under the command of General Botha himself (who was also in supreme command of the Campaign as a whole) was, in the first instance, to occupy Walfisch Bay. From thence Swakopmund was to be captured ; after that a march of some hundred and twenty miles of sandy and mostly waterless country to Karibib. From there, through country boasting of some vegetation, the force was to advance to Windhuk the Capital, another eighty miles, with a view to the capture of the long-range wireless station—the principal purpose and objective of the campaign. The subsequent movements of the respective Columns would depend on the success attending these operations and the movements of the German Forces.

The various units were from time to time redistributed from one Force to another. But approximately just before the general advance (as at March 5th 1915), the numbers of the respective Forces, including the reinforcements preparing, were as follows. The Northern Force consisted (in round figures) of 21,000 men of whom 13,000 were mounted. The Central Force numbered 11,000 of whom 3,800 were mounted. The Southern Force numbered 9,200 practically all mounted ; and the Eastern Force had 2,500 men, all mounted or connected with the motor transport. Of this total of about 43,000, some 3,400 were " Administrative " ; and of the rest about 27,000 were mounted men, 11,500 Infantry and 1,500 Artillery.¹

¹ Total forces raised for G.S.W. campaign 67,000 Europeans, 35,000 natives (non-combatants).

The total number of troops actually engaged in the operations was thus over forty thousand men, double the original estimate. This number may seem on the face of it to have been out of all proportion to the German Forces that could be brought into the field. But the country to be covered and conquered was vast in size, the lines of communication were very long, and the strategic difficulties were great. Moreover, as already mentioned, the two lines which ran west and east formed a junction with the Central railway line, which ran north and south. So long as the Germans held the interior lines they could very rapidly concentrate their forces at any given point North or South, East or West. Indeed, as General Smuts said, "the railway was the principal implement of warfare used by the Germans in the Campaign."

The German forces were estimated at some nine thousand men, well drilled and very fully equipped with field guns and heavy artillery, and with prepared entrenched positions. It was essential, therefore, that each separate Column of the Union Forces should be sufficient in numbers and arms to meet any possible concentration of the enemy, and this involved a much larger force than otherwise would have been necessary.

IV

The first portion of the Northern Force sailed on December 21st, 1914, under the command of Colonel Skinner on six transports escorted by two Cruisers, and landed at Walfisch Bay without opposition on Christmas Day. During the next few days some slight skirmishing in the neighbourhood took

place ; and, about a fortnight later, an advance force was sent towards Swakopmund to reconnoitre. The town was found to be practically evacuated and was occupied with only slight resistance.

The Germans at Swakopmund, as had been the case at Luderitz, evacuated the town without attempting to defend it, and the whole civilian population as well as the military, took their departure leaving everything absolutely intact—not to return for many months. “ At Swakopmund (as I noted in my account of my visit to the front) I slept in the house which was formerly the Governor’s house ; a fine building with good rooms and well furnished. Everything in the house had been left behind. In my bedroom was a German translation of Kruger’s ‘ Autobiography,’ German novels, and songs set to music, etc. I slept in a bed which was supplied with the usual German feather bed—a somewhat warm covering in this climate. In one of the living-rooms there was a gramophone left by the Germans, and among the records were two or three marked ‘ English lessons,’ which consisted of a series of sentences in English reproduced by the gramophone, from which the Germans, sitting round, would be able to acquire a knowledge of the English language ! ” Of the German photographs left in the house the less said the better.

There is little doubt that the Germans were under the full belief that they were winning the war in Europe, that the occupation by the Union Forces would be but temporary, and they would soon re-occupy the town in triumph ; and to avoid any destruction to their property, they elected not to resist the occupation. Indeed the only damage

done to the town had been inflicted in the previous September, when, in anticipation of the first Expedition, an Auxiliary Cruiser had shelled the town, then occupied by German troops, and by bad luck had damaged the two things which would have been of the most value to our troops, the water condenser and the landing jetty, as well as the wireless station.

Swakopmund was occupied by the Union troops and became from henceforth the headquarters of the Expedition. The construction of a railway from Walfisch to Swakopmund, some twenty miles, was at once put in hand ; and as soon as the necessary material had arrived, the railway from Swakopmund towards Karibib, which had been put out of action by the Germans, was gradually repaired and relaid on the old permanent way ; and when the final advance from the base was made some fifty miles of line were available for the Infantry and for transport.

On January 23rd 1915, General Botha, escorted by Admiral King-Hall in his Flagship, left Cape Town to take command of the whole campaign, and more especially of the Northern force. He arrived at Swakopmund on February 11th having touched at Luderitz on the way to confer with General Mackenzie, to inspect the troops, to condole with them on their long and disheartening wait, and to encourage them to hope that it would soon be at an end.

On the 20th he attacked a force of the enemy near by and defeated them in a skirmish, from which however they managed to extricate themselves without material loss. On March 19th, he made a move forward with the Mounted men, and attacked

and defeated a force of the enemy at Jackalswater and Riet ; and if it had not been for some misunderstanding, the whole force of the enemy engaged would in all probability have been captured.

Then came a necessary wait of some weeks while the railway was being pushed further forward, wells were sunk, reinforcements were arriving, transport and commissariat were being organised.

The Central Force—some of whom had been occupying Luderitz since the previous September—had been gradually advancing across the sand belt towards Aus. Successive posts were occupied after slight skirmishes with the enemy who were driven back ; and the railway was relaid towards the front. Garub, sixty-five miles from Luderitz, fifteen miles from Aus, was occupied by the middle of February and became the advance camp ; water was found there and wells were sunk, which materially supplemented the brackish water from Luderitz and the water brought all the way from the Cape.¹

On March 26th, General Botha paid a second visit to Luderitz ; and at last, on the 30th, by which time the Infantry had been reinforced by about 3,000 mounted men and the railway had been carried somewhat nearer to Aus, the order to advance was given. When the long delayed advance thus at last took place, the troops, to their great chagrin, found that the guns commanding the approach had been withdrawn and that Aus itself had been evacuated by the Germans.

After some delay at Aus, due to the necessity of

¹ Sir George Farrar, the well-known "Randite" was in charge of the well-sinking, and most efficiently he did his work. He was fatally injured at the end of March in a trolley accident, and his premature death was universally mourned.

bringing up supplies, and of advancing and repairing the railway for the use of the Infantry, a forward movement was made by the Mounted men on April 15th across country to the north east, to strike the railway north of Keetmanshoop. After a rapid and successful march, the enemy was finally brought to action by the Brigade at Gibeon on April 25th, were severely defeated and forced to retreat northwards along the railway.

Meanwhile the Southern and Eastern Forces had been working up from the south and south-east, through a difficult country.

The Southern Force which had been at first engaged in putting an end to the Maritz-German operations in the Upington district, entailing some severe fighting, began its advance on February 26th. The extension of the Railway from Prieska rail-head to Upington, a distance of about 140 miles, had been taken in hand at the beginning of September and been completed through a difficult country in ten weeks—a remarkable feat of rapid construction. The line was being further extended to Nakob, on the border, and was finally linked up with the German system at Kalkfontein.

On March 6th, after some fighting, the Orange River was crossed at Schuits Drift, German territory was entered, and Ukamas on the one side and Warmbad on the other were occupied. After an arduous march, and some further fighting, Kalkfontein was captured at the beginning of April.

The Eastern Force, consisting of about 2,500 mounted men together with guns and motor transport, was simultaneously occupied in a toilsome and hazardous march from Kuruman to Rietfontein on the border opposite Keetmanshoop, across the water-

less Kalahari Desert, dependent on bore-holes—at one part as much as 110 miles apart. The troops, who started on March 6th, arrived at Rietfontein on March 31st, and advanced towards Keetmanshoop, getting into touch with a portion of the Southern Force.

At the beginning of April General Smuts, who had in February paid a flying visit to both the Southern and Central Forces, took over the command of the Southern, the Central and the Eastern Forces, in order to co-ordinate their movements. He arrived at Kalkfontein on April 11th, on April 17th Seeheim the junction was captured, and on April 20th Keetmanshoop was occupied without resistance. Meanwhile Mackenzie had occupied Aus and was well on his way to Gibeon to cut the railway north of Keetmanshoop.

By the end of the month the whole of the Southern section of the country was cleared of the enemy, and such of them as remained in the field had retired northwards where they were to meet the forces under General Botha.

V

To return to the Northern Force. By the end of April the preparations for an advance were complete and the Commander-in-Chief had now at his disposal a large force of twenty thousand men, some thirteen thousand of whom were mounted. The Burgher Brigades were under Dutch-speaking Commandants,—Colonels Myburgh, Brits, Alberts and Manie Botha. Three of these were M.P.'s and all of them had fought in the South African War, and had recently been engaged in the suppression of the

Rebellion. The Imperial Light Horse were under the command of General Lukin.¹

On April 28th General Botha began his advance, the mounted Brigades leading the way along the dry bed of the Swakopmund river, and the Infantry following through the sandy waste along the track of the railway which was being relaid. The mounted Brigades, mobile, free of impedimenta, and moving with great rapidity, outflanked the enemy; and after a final march of forty miles over a waterless country, accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, they reached Karibib on May 6th, which at once surrendered. A few days later the Infantry arrived after a most trying march, and the main force was concentrated and rested at Karibib.

General Botha then dispatched the Burgher Brigades with some Artillery towards Windhuk; and, on May 10th, he himself left Karibib with his Staff by motor-car and arrived at the Capital on the 12th. He was met by the Burgomaster and other Officials, who informed him (as they had previously announced by telephone) that they would hand over the town without resistance. The Union Jack was hoisted and Martial Law was proclaimed in the presence of the Union troops and of the Burgomaster and other residents. The long-range wireless station was occupied, but the Germans themselves had already put it out of action. General Botha and his flying force then returned to Karibib to prepare for the final advance to the north-east. So far the Campaign—South, Central and North—had worked out “according to plan.”

¹ Lt. General Sir Henry Lukin K.C.M.G. He, subsequently, in December 1915, went to Europe in command of the First South African Brigade.

The German forces had retired northwards ; and within a few days General Botha received a communication from Governor Seitz from Grootfontein asking for an Armistice with a view to a meeting to discuss possible terms of surrender ; and, on May 20th, General Botha met Governor Seitz and Colonel Franke the Commander of the German Forces. The terms proposed—that hostilities should be suspended and that the two military forces should, until the Peace decided the disposal of the Country, respectively retain the territory then in their actual occupation—were so fantastic, as to make it clear, either that the Germans were bluffing or that they were unaware of the strength of the forces being brought against them.

The terms proposed were referred to Ministers and myself. They were altogether unacceptable, and it was decided that no terms could be agreed to except unconditional surrender.

General Botha coincided in our views ; but characteristically, in a telegram to General Smuts to be communicated to me, stated that while he had informed Governor Seitz quite clearly that the only terms to which he could agree would be the complete handing over of the Country, he did not definitely demand unconditional surrender “as I felt we should not do anything to hurt their pride unnecessarily, and you know how bitter such demands on us (i.e. during S.A. War) made us feel.”

There was some necessary delay before the further and final advance could be made. Botha in writing to me on June 15th said that “the delay in the prosecution of the campaign after the occupation of Windhuk is unfortunately taking longer than I

had anticipated. But this could not be avoided, as our horses were in a very poor condition after the strenuous trek last month, and must be rested and fed. When we start again we have to march more than two hundred miles through thick bush country, all the way under conditions therefore which are very favourable to the enemy ; want of water continues to be a great problem, as long waterless tracks have to be covered, and we shall be to a great extent dependent upon wells, which can quite easily be destroyed or rendered useless by the enemy."

But on June 18th the move was made. The German Forces had retired along the railway towards Otavi some two hundred and fifty miles distant and north-east of Karibib. After heavy marching with but a scanty water-supply, the junction of the northern light railway at Otavifontein was occupied, and Otavi itself was reached by the mounted Brigades on July 1st, the German Forces falling back with some slight skirmishing as they advanced. The Infantry who showed remarkable endurance, arrived only three days later than the mounted Brigades, after a long, hot, dusty and exhausting march and very short of both water and food.

The Germans had taken up their last stand about ten miles north of Otavi. But, instead of the immediate frontal attack anticipated by the enemy and which would have entailed heavy loss of life, Botha carried out his usual tactics. While he held the enemy in front with the 1st Infantry Brigade under Brigadier General Beves and some Heavy Artillery, together with Manie Botha's and Lukin's mounted Brigades, he sent the other mounted Brigades to make a widespread flanking movement

on each side, with the object of occupying the hilly country behind the German position and cutting the two branch railways in their rear.

The right wing under Colonel Myburg¹ made a long and rapid sweep, crossing the north-eastern span of the railway between Otavi and Grootfontein; and on the same day (July 4th), after a skirmish, they arrived at Tsumeb where were concentrated large stores of munitions. Their arrival was so unexpected that the enemy made only a feeble resistance; the town was occupied, six hundred prisoners were taken and some hundreds of British prisoners were released. The left wing under Colonel Coen Brits made a still wider encircling movement, and on July 8th appeared at Namutoni some forty miles north west of Tsumeb, and surprised a small force of the enemy who surrendered.

From the beginning to the end of the Campaign the Germans were out-manœuvred and outflanked by the mobility of the Mounted men. The German Commander at Tsumeb had calculated that, considering the distance and nature of the country, the earliest day on which an attack could be made would be the Tuesday, but "the verdampte Burghers turned up on Sunday when we were not ready for them." Indeed, the Germans subsequently complained that the mounted Brigades

¹ Brig. General Myburgh C.B. Dutch by descent, died in 1919. I cannot refrain from a word of tribute to one of the most gallant and lovable of those whose friendship I had the privilege of making in South Africa.

General Myburgh was personally the most pacific and neighbourly of men, but he said to one of my daughters: "I have shot natives, I have shot Englishmen, I have shot Boers (in the Rebellion), I have shot Germans (in G.S.W.) and I don't know who I shall be likely to shoot next!"—a pithy epitome of South African history.

were unfairly mobile and rapid in their movements, and hardly played the game or carried out the rules of war.

One of the difficulties in attempting to outflank the enemy in that atmosphere and in that sandy country was, as Botha told me, the dust raised by the horses which could be seen at a great distance, thus warning the enemy of the approach of the mounted Columns.

While these flanking movements were being made, a local Armistice, not to apply elsewhere, had been arranged at Otavi on July 6th and Colonel Franke was given till July 9th to surrender. At the last moment, just as the Armistice was about to expire, the enemy over-estimating the strength of the somewhat scanty forces which immediately faced them, and finding themselves being outflanked and their retreat cut off, agreed to surrender and unconditionally.

General Botha, in describing to me the final operations told me, as I noted at the time (August 1915), "that from conversations he had had with Franke and Seitz he thinks the Germans probably now regret that they did not put up a fight at the end before surrendering. If they had done so, though he has no doubt as to the ultimate result, he would have been in a tight place. The Germans had their 3,400 men concentrated, entrenched and with plenty of field and machine guns. He only had immediately available Lukin's and Manie Botha's Brigades, not much more than 3,000 men in all, and the two Brigades were some distance apart from one another. Brits and Myburgh were a long way off and out of touch. Supply and transport difficulties were great, and by the time he could have brought up his

Infantry and superior forces, the enemy, especially with their guns, could, for the time being, have made it very uncomfortable for him—or even worse. The Germans probably thought however, that as Botha once or twice before had brought up much larger forces and much more quickly than they had expected, that he had many more men at his immediate disposal than he actually had.”

This view was fully confirmed to my mind when I visited the place in October 1919. The German position was a very strong one, and could only be attacked from the front over a more or less open and contracted plain with hills on either side. There were well planned and well constructed trenches, carefully concealed gun-emplacements, and the range for rifle and gun had been methodically marked.

At the time that the Armistice was arranged, I was in residence at Durban, but I happened to be paying a visit to Ladysmith, with the primary object of meeting there three of the Ministers who were coming down from Pretoria to hold an Executive Council; and we had also intended to visit the battlefields at Colenso and round Ladysmith.

The Executive Council was held on the morning of July 7th in the special train. Almost immediately afterwards a telegram was received from General Smuts (Acting Prime Minister), who was at Pretoria with other Members of the Cabinet, repeating a telegram from General Botha informing us of the Armistice, detailing an interview with Governor Seitz, and stating the terms he proposed to make. At the same time a further telegram was received from General Botha asking us to go to Pretoria as an immediate decision was urgently required from

the military point of view. We left at once and arrived at Pretoria the following morning.¹

The whole position was then carefully reviewed by the Cabinet and by myself; and, after some further communications with General Botha, the terms of surrender were agreed to, and the German troops laid down their arms on July 9th 1915. The terms involved unconditional surrender but the conditions attached were of a generous nature. The Officers were allowed to retain their swords, and on giving their parole were to be free to live in any place that was selected; the non-commissioned Officers and men were to keep their rifles (without ammunition) and were to be interned in German South West; the reservists and others were to be given back their rifles for protective purposes, and the reservist prisoners were to be released and to be allowed to return to their farms on parole.

VI

The effective campaign from start to finish only occupied some six months, no small feat in a country of vast distances, with deficiency of water, heavy and driving sand, hot and dusty marching.

All the troops who took part in the Campaign

¹ Rumours of the wildest description were current during the War and people were very jumpy. It was simply stated in the Press that the Governor General had left Ladysmith suddenly for Pretoria. Nothing was then known publicly about an Armistice in German South West, and it was immediately asserted by all and sundry as a certain fact, and with meticulous detail, that there had been a very serious rising at Harrismith in the Free State, that three hundred armed rebels had taken possession of the town, and that I had gone up there secretly from Ladysmith to see what I could do to settle the difficulty.

were South African, and were under the control of the Union Defence Department.¹ It was the first time in South African history that a military campaign of any dimensions was carried through without the intervention or the assistance of Imperial troops.

At the same time, while the Union undertook the whole responsibility and burden of the campaign, the Imperial Government co-operated effectively in the provision of transport and convoy for the Oversea Expeditions, by covering and protecting the two bases at Walfisch and Luderitz, and by guarding the lines of sea communication from Cape Town. They also materially supplemented the available supply of munitions with rifles, maxims, field guns and heavy guns. The Naval C.I.C. and the G.O.C. gave valuable personal help in all these respects.

To organize and to carry through the German South West Campaign which involved not only two land, but two Oversea Expeditions as well, was a big undertaking for a small white Community. In addition to the land forces of some eleven to twelve thousand men which operated on the German-Union frontier, a force of over thirty thousand men, about sixteen thousand of whom were mounted men, with guns, horses, medical stores, mules and transport, were conveyed to two separate ports, five hundred and seven hundred miles respectively from the base. All supplies, every pound of provisions for the men, much of the water for their consumption, and every ton of forage for the horses and mules, had to be brought from Cape Town. The railway material for rapid railway construction had also to be brought from Cape Town. All these men, horses,

¹ Rhodesia contributed an Infantry Regiment.

guns, transport, supplies and railway material had to be landed at two ports, Luderitz and Walfisch Bay—at which the appliances for disembarkation were not designed for such large operations—and at Swakopmund itself which was an open roadstead.

The first part of the campaign had to be conducted from the sea coast over a stretch of sixty to a hundred miles of sandy, rocky, waterless desert, with practically no wells for some considerable distance.

A well-deserved tribute may be paid to the Defence Department, to its Ministerial Head, General Smuts, and to the Heads of the Department. The Defence Department had only been in existence for about two years and was barely in working order¹ and was not organised on a scale to undertake extensive operation. It was called upon suddenly and without warning to produce, train and equip forces for operations on a scale that would have severely taxed the resources of a well organised and experienced War Office. It had first to undertake the suppression of the Rebellion, then to carry through the German South West Campaign, and subsequently to contribute large forces for the German East Campaign, as well as to send to Europe and to reinforce an Oversea Contingent.

It is a marvel that under such circumstances the improvised work of administration and of organisation, the provision of arms and equipment and of commissariat, and of transport, etc., were carried out so efficiently, and with so few mistakes or breakdowns.

¹ The Defence Act came into force in 1912. In connection with the organisation of the Defence force, Lord Methuen gave invaluable help.

The plan of Campaign had been well thought out ; the troops were efficiently handled, and the several and separate Forces co-operated effectively with one another. The casualties were light, 114 men and officers were killed or died of wounds, and 318 were wounded.

But the difficulties and hardships of the campaign were undoubtedly very great ; discomfort and privations for the Mounted men, and for the Infantry inconceivable weariness and heavy marching through a hot and waterless country, with deep, and irritating wind-blown sand. The Campaign, on the other hand, had one redeeming feature, the country, unlike German East, was healthy, and the troops suffered but little from serious sickness.

The Germans fought well when they had the opportunity, but they were nearly always faced with superior and mobile forces, and had to retreat before the British advance. A considerable number therefore, of the Union Forces especially the Infantry engaged in the campaign did not fire a shot, and it was a case of "one poor lion hasn't got a Christian." Indeed the main 'grouse' that I heard from the Officers and men was not in reference to the drawbacks and discomforts of the campaign, but disappointment at the few opportunities they had had of a scrap with the enemy.

At the time that War broke out the German population of the Territory amounted to about fourteen thousand. Under the terms of surrender, the soldiers, the police and all officials were to be repatriated after the war. Under these provisions, and including a considerable number of others who might be classed as "undesirables," and who were also sent out of the country for the country's

good, some six thousand Germans were repatriated. Only about eight thousand Germans were left in the country, those in fact who had made, or who intended to make it their home—farmers, tradesmen, professional classes etc.

This is not the place to discuss the future of the South West Territory as it is now called. Under the Peace of Versailles the Territory was handed over to the Union "to be administered as an integral part of the Union with full power of administration and legislation," subject to the Mandate of the League of Nations.

CHAPTER VI

BOTHA THE MAN

PART I

CHARACTERISTICS

I

I HAVE now to deal with much the most difficult part of my task ; to attempt to give a picture of Louis Botha himself which will in any degree represent the man as he really was, and as he appeared to those who knew him well.

It is far from my desire to assume the functions of the native M'Bongo or 'tribal praiser' whose duty it is on all public occasions to extol his Chief in high-flown language and hyperbole, to exaggerate the virtues that he may possess and to attribute to him many others that he wots not of. But in describing a personality such as that of Botha, for whom I had such a sincere admiration, it is difficult to be entirely truthful without being apparently fulsome.

My endeavour will be, as far as I can to preserve a just mean and an even balance.

I have known a good many 'big men' in my time, but I think he was the most human and the most loveable of them all ; and he was imbued with that indefinable magnetism and charm which is

innate to its happy possessor, but which cannot be analysed nor described.

He possessed in a marked degree personality and character, which are of the essence of greatness. In manner he was dignified, simple and natural, most courteous and considerate in his bearing; and his genial and kindly ways, his winning and encouraging smile, his hearty handshake, dissipated shyness and reserve.

His standard of conduct was based on a natural sense of honour, duty and obligation. His integrity and honesty of purpose were patent. Obviously and transparently sincere, his dealings were above board, and there was no concealment as to his views or sentiments.

Unaffected, modest and unassuming, he combined natural simplicity with inherited shrewdness: he was at once both wise and simple, with a refreshing fund of common sense. While very sensitive to injustice, hardship or wrong, and tolerant by disposition, he felt ingratitude deeply and abhorred pettiness.

Extremely courteous himself—a delightful old fashioned old world courtesy—he greatly resented any want of courtesy or consideration in others. I remember one evening at Pretoria his expressing to me his antipathy to the German Emperor not only because he had played the Boers false; but especially, and this rankled, because of the Kaiser's discourtesy in refusing to receive President Kruger, an old man travelling on a heart-breaking pilgrimage to Europe, and whom, when it appeared to be to his advantage to do so, he had encouraged and professed to support.

Himself tactful and sympathetic, he never in-

dulged in personalities, never hit below the belt. He hated personal quarrels, and petty jealousies were to him mean and contemptible. In discussing a departmental dispute which had given him a good deal of trouble, he remarked to me with some warmth: "I feel strongly inclined to go down and sjambok the whole lot, they think of themselves and not of those who suffer from their quarrels."

Highly efficient himself, he was impatient of inefficiency in others. But, nevertheless, being essentially good natured, he would, unless the matter called for strong language or stern action, deal with the difficulty that had arisen with infinite patience and consideration for the feelings of those concerned; and it was only in private that he would express in suitable language his impatience at their stupidity or folly.

Botha was a steadfast friend, and a chivalrous enemy. Very loyal to his friends, he inspired deep, abiding and reciprocal loyalty and love. One whom Botha esteemed highly, himself a loveable character, in his broken but expressive English spoke to us of Botha as the "most loving man in South Africa."

Louis Botha's religious faith was one of simple piety and belief in the guiding Hand of God. It was the bedrock of his existence. His profound conviction appears constantly in his public utterances.

In bidding goodbye to his men in German South West he said: "When you consider the hardships we met, the lack of water, the poisoned wells and how wonderfully we were spared, you must realise and believe God's Hand protected us and it is due to His intervention we are safe to-day." A month before his death, on landing at Cape Town

after his return from the Peace Conference, he spoke these words to the people of South Africa : " I have never been so hopeful in my life as I am this morning, God has brought us in marvellous fashion through this War to the brilliant sunshine of victory, and to Him be the honour and the gratitude." In neither case were his words, words of convention, but they expressed a passionate belief which showed in his daily practice and in the nobility of his character.

II

Botha—' the General ' as he was habitually called—was very accessible to all and sundry who wished to see him ; and the humblest visitor was received and the most trivial matter was discussed with courteous kindness and consideration, as though the visitor were a person of importance and the matter urgent and vital. With infinite patience he would allow his visitors to talk for hours—and a Dutch visit is, as a rule no short affair—especially if he thought that, by so doing, he could persuade to his way of thinking or remove difficulties or doubts from the mind.

In times of anxiety or unrest he spared no pains to get into personal touch with the leading Predikants, Commandants and civilians in order to take them into his confidence, to persuade them to his view, to strengthen them in their support.

His patience and persuasive powers were strikingly shown in an incident which he described to my wife. It will be remembered that at the time of the Treurfontein meeting in August 1914 (the first indication of unrest which preceded the Rebellion), Botha sent for General de la Rey, between whom

and himself there existed great mutual affection and admiration.

De la Rey came over to Pretoria, and in the evening Botha and Smuts, Schalk Burger and de Wet (Minister of Justice) talked to him till past midnight, arguing with him, and urging him not to attend the meeting where they were afraid he might commit himself to some action. "To everything we said," Botha related, "he replied that he had a message from God, and that he must go to the meeting, and he supported his views with texts out of the Bible." The others at last were worn out, gave up the struggle and went away. "But (said Botha), I went on talking to him, and finally said to him: 'If you have a real message from God He would have given you a date when you were to take action and you cannot tell us a date.' 'The Prophet van Rensburg has said the fifteenth.' 'But he did not specify the month.' This omission appeared to disturb de la Rey, and finally he gave in, and said he would attend the meeting and counsel calmness." Then, very late, they went to bed. But de la Rey slept very badly, and so did Botha, and at six o'clock they both got up and Botha took him his coffee on the stoep, and they finally parted as great friends as ever.

With his accessibility Botha did not combine the useful accomplishment of being able to say "not at home" either on the telephone or off; and it was a marvel to me, with these perpetual calls upon his time and constant interruptions to his work, how he managed to get through all his other duties as well.

And, indeed, in this matter, I always thought he was much too tenderhearted, and that he allowed

his good nature to be too easily exploited ; and, on occasion, I used to expostulate and tell him that it was not fair to himself nor to his work to allow these immense incursions on his time.

But, apart from his natural inability to say ' No ' in a matter of this sort, he urged that, from his own point of view and from that of his own people it was the right thing to do. It had always been, he argued, the custom in the old Republican and somewhat pastoral days of the Transvaal (and of the Free State also), for those in Office, from the President downwards, to be the " Fathers of their people," to be freely accessible to any burgher who desired to come and sit and smoke on the stoep and discuss any mortal thing at interminable length.

It was of no avail to point out to him that, whilst these dilatory methods of administration were all very well in the ' spacious days of Great Elizabeth,' in the days of the ox-wagon and of trekking, and when, moreover, each of the four Territories had each its own President or Prime Minister, it had ceased to be feasible in these latter days of motors and telephones and with but one Prime Minister for the whole of the vast Union.

Undoubtedly, Botha's accessibility, whatever its disadvantages, and the strain upon him was very great, did much to enable him to keep in touch with his people and his Party.

His relations with his Dutch-speaking followers were remarkable. To each and all of them, however obscure or however powerful he might be, the General was brother and friend as well as leader. His influence over them was very exceptional.

The warm personal and loyal support he received from his Party and his Caucus during the troublous

years of difficulty and of doubt, was to him a matter of profound satisfaction and pride. When differences of opinion arose and ordinary arguments failed to convince, a "heart to heart talk" (as he called it) with his winning ways, his sincerity, and persuasiveness, would impress and persuade.

From his 'stalwarts,' as he delighted to speak of them—to name them would be invidious—most of whom had been with him or under him during the South African War, and who had for him a profound admiration and affection, he received a staunch and unfailing support. He had, as we shall presently see, to try them on occasion very high, but they never failed him.

Botha had, at the beginning of the War, a signal proof, of their devotion to him, which pleased him greatly. Soon after War was declared and when the German South West Campaign was in preparation, he was anxious to send a Brigade or two of mounted Burghers to accompany the Expedition to Swakopmund. He called together some thirty-five of the Transvaal Commandants, most of whom had served under him in the South African War, in order to ask them to take a part in the German South West Campaign under his command. The idea of the Expedition was, as he knew (and as we have seen) distasteful to many of them; and he was somewhat anxious and nervous as to the result of the meeting. He explained the position to the Commandants and asked them for their assistance. They one and all, without exception, from a feeling of camaraderie and devotion to Botha, said that they were prepared to go anywhere he chose to send them. It then became necessary to select ten or a dozen from those present who would

act as the Superior Officers. The selection was an invidious task, for a Burgher Force is a democratic institution and the Commandants present were all more or less of equal standing. Botha was at his wits' ends to know what to do, as if he himself made the selection, he felt sure that some of the others would naturally be offended, and might either decline to go, or at all events be disappointed and disheartened.

At that moment he was called away on some urgent matter. When he came back in about half an hour, the Commandants informed him that they had realised his difficulty, had talked the matter over and had selected from amongst themselves those they thought might be the most suitable. But, "they did not wish in any way to restrict his choice if he preferred any of the others, and everyone of them, including those selected, would be content to serve in any capacity, even as ordinary troopers, as they had the fullest confidence in him."

Botha came to tell me about the meeting directly afterwards, and expressed with tears in his eyes his gratitude and his relief. All these Commandants subsequently went with him through the Rebellion, and afterwards to German South West, and many of them to German East.

III

Botha was eminently human, and was imbued with a spirit of human sympathy which made him feel keenly for others—for individuals, for sections, for Nations—who were in tribulation. He had himself passed through the Valley of Humiliation, had felt to the full the bitterness of it all, and realised what it meant to others.

He held the view that justice should be tempered with mercy, and that consideration was due to the feelings of others, and this view he consistently carried out when he had the opportunity. This he showed clearly by his action at the time of the Rebellion, in his dealing with the rebels when in arms in the field, and after their suppression ; by his treatment of the German forces in German South West when they surrendered ; in his attitude at the Peace Conference in Europe, and on other lesser occasions.

Further, his calmness of judgment combined with his imagination, enabled him to project himself into the future, and protected him from being over-dominated by the present. To his mind it was folly and wickedness to think only of the immediate punishment and to ignore the ultimate relations which must subsist.

I have already referred to the fact that at the time of the Rebellion he anxiously desired to avoid unnecessary casualties, so that no blood feud should create a bitter memory and a separating force for future years. "Never kill a man," said Botha, some years later, "if you can capture him, or he will never have a chance to be sorry." "I want," he said, when defending the leniency he desired to show to the rebels after the Rebellion was over, "to control those who have been rebels and not to make them desperate and send them to the dogs."

Again, in German South West, when he had the German forces completely surrounded and at his mercy, he insisted indeed on unconditional surrender, but he tempered the bitterness of surrender by spontaneous concessions. This leniency to his conquered foe, for which in some quarters he was, at

the time, severely blamed, was dictated not only by his abhorrence of inflicting humiliation on a fellow creature, but by his realisation that as the conquered Territory would in all human probability become an integral part of the Union, there would be a better likelihood of friendly relations in the future, if, when he had the enemy at his mercy, he treated them generously.

That this policy was sound was forcibly brought home to me when, in 1919, I paid a second visit to German West Africa just after it had been Mandated to the Union. Over and over again the representative Germans who came on deputations to see me, not only spoke with great respect of General Botha as a soldier, but with admiration and gratitude for the chivalry with which he had treated the German forces at the time of the surrender.

On one occasion when he and I were discussing some question in connection with the Trading with the Enemy Bill or some such subject, Botha, with an emphatic gesture, declared that the underlying object and idea of the Bill was repugnant to him as he was always opposed to retaliation. He said, by way of illustration, that at one period of the South African War " Kruger and some others wished to retaliate by blowing up some of the Mines. I was then Commandant-General and I strongly expostulated and said I would resign if anything of the sort were done, and Kruger withdrew his proposal. Judge Kok and others, of the extreme section, had however, determined to take action on their own account. But, fortunately, I heard of their intention in time, and sent a mounted Commando of three hundred men to prevent any

damage being done to the Mines. This they were able to do, and also arrested Kok. I was anxious to have him tried and punished, but Kruger let him off." "And," added Botha with a touch of bitterness, "I have always been against the burning of houses; and the only reward I got for that was that one of the first farm houses to be burnt by Lord Roberts was my own."

His attitude and action at the Peace Conference will be dealt with later.

IV

Of Botha's physical courage there is no question. When he was about to take the field against Beyers, and subsequently against de Wet, and afterwards when he was taking command in German South West, I felt it my duty, knowing how fearless he was, on each occasion to extract from him a promise that he would run no unnecessary personal risks; as, apart from the personal aspect, his life was at that moment of supreme importance to his Country. He gave the promise with some reluctance, but I have considerable doubt whether he kept his word to the full extent that I had desired!

"On one occasion," I told the Secretary of State in a letter of December 1914:—"in the course of the operations near Upington, a few weeks ago, when the Union troops were endeavouring to round up Kemp, General Botha and his Staff, in three or four motors missed their way, got separated from their column, and were careering about the country. After a time they saw in the distance a body of mounted men. They made sure it was one of their own columns of which there are two operating.

They went on to within about five hundred yards of the column, when Botha, using his field glasses, made out that the horses were tired and in bad condition, and realised at once that they could not be his men, but must be a part of Kemp's Commando. Like the King of Israel of old with Jehu after him, they fled away as fast as they could go ; but I am told that Botha himself was rather anxious to have a go at the Commando, but his Staff would not permit it." ¹

The Dutch bent of mind, as both Botha and Smuts more than once frankly said to me, " is rather to go round a difficulty than to face it ; to make a flank rather than a frontal attack." But apart from this disposition of mind—which on occasion may give the impression sometimes of super-caution and sometimes of vacillation—Botha showed great moral courage when faced with actual difficulties. When he had made up his mind, and was confident that he was in the right, no dangers nor disappointment would turn him from his purpose. Pitt said of Dundas : " Dundas is not much of a speaker, but he is one on whom I can always depend ; he is ready to go out with me in all weathers "—and the same might well be said of Botha.

In dealing with public affairs, administrative, party or political, he greatly preferred to gain his end by conciliation and persuasion, even by compromise, than by breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

¹ We had lent our field glasses to the General and his Staff for their use during the operations. The younger members of the family, with some confidence, and not without asperity, each claimed to have been told by the General himself that it was *his* or *her* particular field glasses that saved his life.

In the ordinary relations of life he could be stern and severe, especially with regard to any dereliction of duty. But sternness and severity went against the grain; and this failing led him not infrequently to be in some ways too tolerant and too tender-hearted. He detested refusing any request that was made to him. He hated to say "No" or to give pain, though the "No" might be right and the pain ought to be inflicted. On one occasion, however, the wife of one of his friends who was a candidate for a particular Office came to ask him for his favourable consideration,—“look here, I said to her, how can I appoint him, he has no brain.”

Botha was constitutionally an optimist. But he often spoke chaffingly to me of Smuts as not only an optimist but “a pernicious optimist,” as one to whom the joy of battle was great, and who, unlike himself, rather preferred than otherwise to be in a tight place, in order to find or to fight his way out!

But in spite of this constitutional optimism Botha when he was greatly worried, or his sensitive nature wounded, and especially after his health gave way, would suffer from a wave of deep depression and pessimism. “It takes a lot,” he said to me on one occasion after a serious political crisis, “to make me funky, but the position made me very nervous indeed. I can usually see my way out, but on this occasion I could not see my way through at all at first.” He would detail his woes and discuss his difficulties, and it was no easy task when he was in this mood to re-assure him or to cheer him up.

V

Of actual personal ambition Botha I should imagine had none. “ I am not an Office seeker and should be much happier on my farm,” he said on one occasion in 1913 at Vryheid, his old home. But he did not shrink from responsibility when thrust upon him, and he naturally desired and it rejoiced him, to be successful in anything that he undertook. He was immensely gratified at the enthusiasm of a public meeting or at the personal loyalty and devotion shown to him at the Conferences of his Party or at a Caucus meeting. But his ambition was for his Country and not for himself. He worked always for the general good ; he had no fish of his own to fry, and he was only interested in the good cookery of the common meal.

Pomps, ceremonies and entertainments made no appeal to his hereditary and farming instincts ; but when he had to undergo them he was most punctilious and comported himself with great dignity. When on his visits to Europe he did his best to avoid publicity and the limelight ; indeed nothing he hated more than to be treated as a Lion and to be expected to roar.

He coveted no Honour. In 1907 he accepted a Privy Councillorship as the Prime Minister of a self-governing Colony and as a mark of the confidence of the Sovereign. In 1911 he was made an Honorary General of the British Army—a rare mark of distinction. Of this rank he was very proud, not only because it was in itself a high British honour, but because he appreciated deeply the compliment which it implied to his military career. Other honours however he refused, though gratified at the offer,

either because they made no especial appeal to him, or because he thought that their acceptance would be inexpedient at the time and be misconstrued by some at least in his own country.

Botha did not readily or easily speak English. He spoke with a slight accent, and, like most Dutch South Africans he occasionally dropped an 'h'—the 'h' is mute in Afrikaans—but naturally and not markedly, attractive rather than otherwise. He thought in Dutch and translated as he went along. In conversation therefore he spoke rather slowly and in somewhat laboured English, with sometimes a quaint twist of a phrase or idiom which added to the charm and effectiveness of his talk.

For the same reason he was not fond of writing letters in English and he much preferred that his Secretary or his wife should write to his dictation. His letters to me are, therefore, unfortunately, of little or no value from the biographical point of view, as they dealt almost entirely with matters under discussion. His signature was bold and striking.¹

In the House of Assembly he almost invariably spoke in Afrikaans, and at public meetings, dinners or functions he did not as a rule trust himself in English except for a few sentences. This, as in the House, was probably a wise course, because, as he said to me "if I speak in English, I shall hesitate and lose the thread of my speech; while as I am not sure of using exactly the right word it might be awkward on occasion." Where the audience

¹ He was not, I regret to say, equally complimentary to my handwriting. "His Excellency's is a mis-er-able handwriting," he complained to my wife.

was largely British or the majority did not understand or easily follow Dutch, the Speech had to be interpreted into English which of course detracted seriously from the effect.

The necessity of interpretation once led to an amusing though awkward incident. When Botha was in England in 1911 and the Suffragettes were rampant, he was the principal guest at a public dinner and spoke as usual in Dutch, and the speech was to be interpreted by his then Secretary, Dr. Bok. A pompous and self-assertive Toastmaster was doing the honours. As General Botha sat down, a man got up from a little way off and came up quickly behind him. The Toastmaster taking this to be a Suffragette attack, seized him by the coat and tried to prevent him getting at the General—it was the unfortunate Secretary who had come forward in order to interpret the speech to the company!

I never had the advantage or opportunity of personally observing or hearing the General in the House of Assembly itself; for, under Colonial Office Regulations, Governors and Governor Generals are not permitted to attend the sittings of their respective Representative Assemblies.¹

The following gives a vivid description of Botha's method of speaking in the House of Assembly: "When he spoke, it was in his homely, rugged

¹ There may be a good reason for the Rule, but personally I think that the prohibition, at all events in the case of the Dominions, is a mistake. The Governor General, especially if he happens to be an Old Parliamentary Hand, is in a much better position to size up the Ministers and the Politicians who run the Country, and with whom he has to deal, if he is able himself to observe the position which the particular Minister or Member holds in the House, and how he comports himself there.

Dutch; with frequent use of familiar sayings with abundance of detail without any attempt at eloquence. In these speeches he seemed ordinary, even commonplace; till, with a sudden change, he would swing round to his back-benches, would smile with a quick and charming good-nature that transfigured his face, would throw in some little jest, would make some quick characteristic motion of both hands; and then would become suddenly earnest, would force home his appeal, and would sit down having achieved all that he had set out to do.”¹

“The General’s speaking (as a friend notes for me) was not of an oratorical type, but on great occasions, such as when he moved the Address to the King at the Special Session after the declaration of War, he would rise to considerable heights of eloquence, and his sincerity made a powerful impression. He had, in a unique degree, the power of swaying an audience, particularly a parliamentary audience, by a direct appeal to simple moral conceptions. No one who ever heard Botha with his natural and manly sincerity invoke the feelings of Duty and Honour, no one who ever saw him as he spoke, standing four-square the very embodiment of the qualities he was appealing for in others, could resist the conviction that here was something far different from rhetoric, here was the reliance of a noble mind on the element of nobility present somewhere in all his fellows. At his best and in this mood, there has been no more moving speaker than Botha.

“In the House of Assembly he was somewhat over sensitive to attack and visibly showed his annoyance—a sensitiveness which naturally encouraged

¹ From *Times* Obituary Notice August 29th 1919.

renewed pin-pricks or onslaught. When stirred or annoyed he would move about restlessly in his seat fingering his pencil and impatiently tapping it against his lips, and exchanging whispers with his colleagues on either side of him."

In addition to his Parliamentary and Administrative duties and burdens, a heavy burden of speeches was laid upon his shoulders by his supporters. The S.A.P. Member is (or was) somewhat slack in cultivating his constituency, and under the comfortable impression that he could take things easily, and at the last moment "the General will come and pull me through." The General's good nature and his desire to be in constant contact with his people, and to keep them in heart, made it difficult for him to refuse to come and help them. These speaking tours however involved a serious tax on his time, health and energy.

The details of one such tour may be given. In August and September 1915, in anticipation of the general election in the following October (no doubt a somewhat exceptionally heavy campaign, though typical of others) and following immediately on an important Conference of his Party at Bloemfontein, he undertook a speaking tour in the Free State and the Cape Province. Between August 21st and September 21st, he held thirty-one meetings, and, with the exception of Sundays and a break of two days in the middle when he returned to Pretoria to dispose of certain matters which had arisen, he spoke once if not twice a day. This may not seem a particularly heavy campaign to an English politician with his compact constituency or comfortable travelling. But these party meetings in South Africa are—as Lord Derby said of Mr. Gladstone's

humour—"no laughing matter." Very long speeches are expected on each occasion, followed by hours of heckling or explanation. Great distances have to be covered over very bad roads between meeting and meeting, and much discomfort is involved both day and night.

The heavy administrative work which continuous Office entailed upon Botha, and which was of necessity to a large extent conducted in English, was, I think irksome to him. He was, I imagine, a somewhat slow worker, and to a man of his active habits of life, office work with its confinement and petty detail was uncongenial, and a constant burden and strain upon him.

PART II

LIFE AND SURROUNDINGS

I

THE Parliamentary Session usually lasts from about the end of January to July, that is to say, it begins in the Summer and ends in the Winter, and the Prime Minister of the Union for the time being occupies Groote Schuur, the house which Cecil Rhodes, with prophetic anticipation and foresight,¹ left by his Will for that purpose, together with an endowment for maintenance.

General Botha was the first to fulfil the conditions of occupation. From 1910 onwards he and his family occupied Groote Schuur during the Session of Parliament, living the rest of the year at Pretoria, the Administrative centre, with occasional periods passed at his farm.

The original house was Van Riebeeck's store house, the Great Granary—"Groote Schuur"—built two and a half centuries ago. Rhodes bought the property and the Granary and turned the latter into a dwelling house. Soon afterwards the old house was burnt down, and a new house was designed by Mr. Herbert Baker (the architectural saviour of South Africa) on the lines of the old Dutch houses of the Cape Province.

¹ Rhodes died in November 1902 the Union did not come into being until 1910.

The house, with its rounded gable and heavy stoep stands under the shadow of Table Mountain about two miles from Cape Town. The place in Summer is ideally beautiful; on very hot days Table Mountain becomes a dark translucent blue and makes a wonderful background to the mass of blue hydrangeas, a notable feature of the garden. A stream—the Liesbeck—runs past the garden, with very steep banks covered with more blue hydrangeas, and the oaks make it difficult to realise that it is South Africa.

The house is a “show house,” full, indeed overcrowded with beautiful things collected by Rhodes. It is delightful in Summer, cool and dark. The sitting-room and hall are panelled and ceiled with dark teak and over-shadowed by the stoep. These qualities are however a great drawback in the wet autumn and winter of the Cape Peninsula. General Botha accustomed to the dry sunny winters of the Transvaal, never felt really well at Groote Schuur, and the wet winter of the Cape added to the darkness and damp of the house, told upon his health, although he was appreciative of the beauty and interest of the house and its surroundings.

On General Botha's home and Family life it does not befit me to dwell. His wife, Annie, South African born, whom he married in 1886, a daughter of John Cheere Emmet, was descended from Thomas Emmet, brother of Robert Emmet the Irish Patriot.

It has been well said that “if anywhere you see a great man, be sure there is a true woman behind him.” To know Mrs. Botha is to respect and to love her. She had immense influence over the General, who greatly valued her opinion and advice. Through all the vicissitudes of life, and they were



1902.
Sketch by A. van Weie.

many and varied, the two went through life in storm and calm with single-hearted devotion to one another.

General Botha was a loving father to his children of whom there were five, three boys and two girls: Helen (Mrs. D. de Waal), Frances (Mrs. Botha Reid), Louis, Jantje and Philip.

In South Africa social life differs from ours. There is not much in the way of formal entertainment, and the big English 'dinner' is almost unknown, but in a less formal way South Africans are the soul of hospitality. In the country districts friends come and go practically at their own sweet will, and visitors are warmly welcomed and stay as long as they wish. Botha himself delighted to entertain his friends at Groote Schuur, and to be hospitable to any distinguished visitor who might happen to be passing through Cape Town or Pretoria.

Apart from his farming General Botha's "recreations" were golf and bridge—the former but a poor substitute for riding. He played a passable game at golf, and a very good game of bridge. He loved winning at bridge, and was delighted when he could say, rising from the table, that "Old Brebner (his Secretary) and I have washed the floor with our enemies."

A reference must be made to General Botha's man-servant, an Englishman, who had been through the South African War as a British soldier, and had actually been in the field against Botha himself. Like other faithful and efficient old servants, he was an Institution, the mainstay, if not the master of the household—nevertheless, 'the General' was a hero to his valet. Naturally more than one story,

mainly no doubt apocryphal, was current about him. I hope he will forgive me if I quote two :—

He accompanied his master throughout the German South West Campaign ; and under instructions from Mrs. Botha wrote to her continually to keep her informed as to the health of the General. After the advance from Karibib, Mrs. Botha received a letter : “ Dear Madam and all, me and the General took Windhuk yesterday. The General keeps well.”

On one occasion on the return of the Bothas from Europe, he was, with Miss Helen Botha, unpacking a despatch case, and came upon a series of photographs and flashlights in which the General figured. A photograph of Leonardo da Vinci’s “ The Last Supper ” had slipped in amongst them. This somewhat puzzled him, and he turned to Miss Botha and said : “ I can’t make out where the General is sitting at this dinner, can you Miss ? ”

II

It was said of Botha that he was “ the farmer turned soldier, and the soldier turned statesman.” He was a farmer by nature and at heart—the outdoor life involved was bliss to him.

He began life as a boy helping his father on the farm. After his marriage he settled down on a farm of his own ; and, in ordinary course, he would have remained a farmer all his life, with his heart and soul in his flocks and herds and the tilling of the soil.

He used to say that there were two sorts of farmers, “ the farmer, and the cheque-book farmer.” He combined a little of both, for he was an enlightened and progressive farmer who did not begrudge outlay on the improvement of the breed of his

cattle and of his sheep or on the cultivation of his land.

When he first married and settled down at Vryheid in Zululand in 1886 as a young man, he turned the bare veld into a successful farm and built himself a substantial house, and never failed year by year to plant trees, in which he took a great pride and interest. His property became, it was said, one of the best cultivated and brightest spots of Vryheid.

But Fate designed him for greater things, and at an early age took him from his farm to the field of arms and to the statesman's desk, and his farm and his farming had perforce to hold a secondary place in his interests and in his thoughts.

Nevertheless, though he had but little available time to devote to farming, he always retained a very keen interest in his farm at Rusthof near Standerton in the south eastern Transvaal where he lived after the War. He knew all his stock by sight and had a great eye for points. This on a particular occasion stood him in good stead. On one occasion when on a visit to Europe he went over to France and was entertained at one place by some of the large farmers, who knew him by reputation as a General in the South African War rather than as a farmer. With hospitable intent they told him to pick out as a gift any two rams that he liked from a large flock which they had taken him to see. To their surprise, and somewhat to their chagrin, he promptly picked out the two which were much the best of the bunch.¹

He loved getting away from his desk at Pretoria

¹ There are various versions of this incident. I give the one as told to me.

and his Parliamentary bench at Capetown to his farm at Rusthof. I remember his coming into my room at Capetown at the end of the Session of 1917 to say goodbye. He was at the time unwell, overdone and depressed, but he was just off to his farm and was in tearing spirits at getting away, "though old and lame (said he) I feel like a colt just about to be let out in the field!"

Indeed the fact that he had to lead a sedentary life instead of riding about on his farm all day long, was, without question, the main cause of his premature death. He required constant exercise, riding and walking, and open air, to keep him in proper health, and to keep down his weight, and he could seldom get either. The year before his death he suffered from a swelled leg, which still further limited his opportunities of exercise; and unfortunately, the heavier he got the less exercise he could obtain.

He thoroughly enjoyed being out on campaign and riding about on the open veld with his mounted burghers, and it did him a world of good physically and mentally. Writing in April 1915 to Mr. Harcourt, I said: "I hear that Botha (then in German South West) is in the pink of condition and looks ten years younger in consequence of all the outdoor exercise he has been having, I was told the other day that, after his successful action, which occupied all day, he rode back to his base, some thirty or forty miles, and was the freshest of the party."

I certainly never saw anyone in better spirits or better health than when he came back from German South West after some months' campaigning and roughing it—for he always roughed it with his men. I was inclined to think that, though he was

glad that the Campaign had come to an early and successful issue, his pleasure was tinged with a feeling of regret that the life he had been so thoroughly enjoying had perforce come to an end !

Botha, when he could, always rode a white horse on his campaigns.¹ He had an almost superstitious belief, that a white horse not only possessed better stamina—and it required some sturdiness to carry the General's weight—but also brought good luck.

He once spoke to my wife of his great affection for his wonderful white horse, " Dopper," who carried him through the South African War. Dopper was, he said, as intelligent as any human being, and very nervous and highly strung. In a fight he would quiver and tremble all over and yet never move, so that the General could watch what was going on. He had also a marvellous sense of hearing. " One night when we were marching where we thought the English might be, we could hear nothing see nothing, Dopper suddenly started and gave a little snort, and we discovered a guard (as the General called the sentry). The guard was close to a camp, and if it had not been for Dopper's warning, we should infallibly have been taken prisoners."

III

A remarkable feature of Botha's character was his intuitive and instinctive breadth of vision and his knowledge of human nature. He was born and brought up in narrow surroundings and his educational opportunities were of the most elemen-

¹ The mounted Commandos in German South West, especially those from the Free State, possessed a good many grey or white horses. In order to make these horses less conspicuous they were rubbed over with Condyl's fluid.

tary and scrappy description ; and his subsequent career, a life full of activities, did not allow him much scope for self-education. At General Botha's funeral, one of his sisters said to a member of my Staff : " My father often used to say when my brother was a young man, ' If only I could afford to give Louis a good education you would hear much of him some day.' "

But Botha had a real instinct for educational development, and a sense of the value of experimental and scientific education. He favoured Government educational and experimental farms and Government " studs," and was instrumental in the initiation of an agricultural University. He stoutly supported veterinary research ; and held in high regard the work that was done by the Government Laboratory near Pretoria.

His personal knowledge of the world until middle age was practically confined to the Transvaal, a Country in those days somewhat isolated and self-centred. He became the first Prime Minister of the Transvaal without any previous Parliamentary or Administrative experience except for a year or two as a member of the old Volksraad. But, at once, and in a new and untried Parliament,¹ he discharged the office of Prime Minister with distinction, managed his Cabinet with skill and capacity, and carried out the duties of Leader of the House with ability, broad-mindedness and tact. Later, as Prime Minister of the Union, he showed the same capacity

¹ " With the exception of one Member, none of the Members of the first Legislative Assembly of the Transvaal had ever sat in a House of Parliament in a British Dominion, and not a single one of the Ministry had held Office before under such a Constitution." Mr. G. R. Hofmeyr (late Clerk to the Union House of Assembly) September 1st, 1919.

for the management of the House, of his Cabinet and of his Party.

It was not until he was forty years of age, in 1902, that as one of the three Delegates from the Vereeniging Conference, he crossed the sea for the first time and came to Europe and to London. His visit to England in 1907 as Prime Minister of the Transvaal soon after the grant of Responsible Government, was however his first real opportunity of seeing the world and all that therein is, of widening his mind and his outlook by contact with other persons, peoples and countries, and of meeting in a representative capacity and on terms of equality British Statesmen and the Prime Ministers of the other Dominions.

The visit to England in 1907 was a severe trial to his proud and sensitive nature. A friend, who knew Botha well, told us that when he arrived he still felt much of the bitterness of the past and the irony of his present position. He was, as he expressed it, "tied as a slave to the chariot-wheel." The visit was therefore a painful ordeal for him, and he could hardly bear the adulation and hospitality showered upon him in all sincerity and good will.

Very soon after his arrival, however, King Edward (who had seen him on his previous visit in 1902) sent for him, and they had a long and intimate talk together. The King began the conversation by telling Botha how perfectly he understood his feelings, and that he realised how painful the position must be to him in spite of the admiration they all felt for him, and their anxious desire to express their friendship. When Botha came back from the interview he told our friend that the King had entirely understood his position, that a

great load had been lifted from his mind, and that his feelings in regard to his visit were entirely changed.

Most statesmen who make their mark pass through a progressive intellectual and moral development before they attain their highest level. As life went on Botha acquired no doubt experience and knowledge of many things—of the English language, of Parliamentary procedure, of Debate, of Cabinet responsibility and cohesion, of the details of Administration, of Imperial and Foreign problems. But in all essentials his powers seem to have been inherent and not acquired, and this he showed by the acuteness of his judgment on big questions of which he had little detailed knowledge. His character was such that he instinctively took the broad view and the long view, and sought the path of tolerance, sympathy and humanity. It is impossible to think of Louis Botha as ever having been less of a great man than he was in his latter years.

IV

General Botha was, unquestionably, a great General and military Leader. But again he had no military training. His only experience of actual fighting previous to the South African War was a fillibustering expedition in connection with an internecine native war in Zululand.

Like all South African farmers he was at home on a horse, and with a rifle ; and knew how to take full advantage of mobility and rapidity of movement, and how to combine individual initiative and discretion with effective co-operation. But his genius for a plan of campaign, his flair for tactics and strategy, were intuitive.

When the South African War began Botha, in an astonishingly short space of time rose, as we have seen, from a humble capacity to be Commander-in-Chief. And throughout the main campaign, and afterwards during the many weary months of guerilla warfare, he shewed real military genius, was full of resource and strategy and fertile in methods of deceiving the enemy.

It has been said of him that during that period he was better at a Council-of-War than in the Field itself. But, whether that be so or no, his masterly handling of the Rebellion, and his planning and conduct of the campaign in German South West, shewed that he could be supreme in both. He was endowed with that knowledge of finding out "what the other man was doing and thinking on the other side of the hill," which Wellington used to say was the essence of generalship.

Many sayings are credited to General Botha which illustrate his strategy. "The best way to defeat your enemy is to strike at his rearguard," he once said. "But suppose you come up on his front?" asked the Officer to whom he made this remark. "Then go round and look for his rearguard," said Botha. "When you attempt to strike at the Boer flank (he told another British Officer) you must never be surprised to find that you have struck the centre, because Boers fight without flanks."

Botha discussed freely, and without restraint as indeed does everyone in South Africa who fought on either side, the incidents and operations of the South African War. The war was a common topic of discussion at dinner parties at Government House by those who had fought against one another.

They would fight their battles o'er again, and chaff each other on their respective prowess, exploits or misadventures.¹

My wife noted on one of these occasions at Pretoria (December 1915) that "I went in to Dinner with General van Deventer, who is quartered at Roberts Heights and who is just off to German East in command of one of the Mounted Brigades, an enormous Dutchman six foot six and very broad. He knew very little English, but we managed quite well as I talked very slowly and simply. He is highly pleased at Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's coming out in command as he fought him in the Boer War and thinks very well of him. I said 'Were you more successful against him than he was against you?' and he replied 'We was much the same.'"

There are few able-bodied British of a certain age who, on Official occasions, do not wear the South African Medals. Two years ago the King signed a warrant conferring "a Decoration for devoted Service Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 on certain Officers of the late Republican Forces." The Officers on whom this Decoration was awarded numbered about two hundred, and the list was published in the Union Defence Force General Orders.

When two or three years ago the question of a more liberal treatment in the matter of War Pensions was being considered, a proposal was made, and agreed to at once by the Government, and accepted without opposition from any quarter of the House of Assembly, that all those who had fought on either

¹ Six members of Botha's Union Cabinets, Botha, Smuts, Hertzog, de Wet, Theron and Mentz fought against us—and with distinction.

side in the South African War—British Officers and men, Commandants and Burghers of the Republican Forces—should be brought under the provisions of the Pensions Law.

The General used to relate to us stories about the war which he told with great vivacity. Two of these I particularly remember.

On one occasion General Botha was informed that three or four hundred of his men had been cornered in a barbed wire enclosure of about six miles in extent. He was afraid that some of the men would surrender, so he contrived to join them ; and he then concerted a plan to get them out by rushing the wire on horseback, not staying to clip it, as that would give the British time to fire. The Commandant was his cousin, Piet Botha, " a very religious man," and a prayer meeting was held after the plan of escape was settled, and then Piet Botha addressed the men and ended up by saying—" You have God in front of you, the Commandant-General and I shall be behind you with a sjambok ! " They started in this order ; the barbed wire was successfully rushed, two or three horses were badly cut, but not a man was hurt or wounded.

Another story he was fond of repeating. When the final Armistice was being negotiated it was proposed that it should be for a period of fourteen days. Two days before the arrangement was concluded, Botha informed Coen Brits, who was in command of a body of Boers, of the proposal. Brits was aghast, " But I can't live for a fortnight under an Armistice. We have no supplies of our own ; all our daily wants are supplied by raiding the British, and we never have more than two or three days' rations in hand. It's impossible."

"Well," said Botha, "you must do what you can before the Armistice is signed." Thereupon Brits went with a hundred men, lay all night in a donga close to the British camp, with momentary risk of detection and annihilation. Early in the morning when the British troops, unaware of his presence, had for the most part left the camp, he surprised it and drove off six hundred cattle which lasted his men throughout the period of the Armistice.¹

To two incidents only in connection with the War did I ever hear General Botha refer with any bitterness. The one was the burning of his farmstead near Vryheid where he had lived during the early days of his married life and where he had found so much happiness. He never visited the place again.

The other—and to this he alluded on more than one occasion to me, and with some indignation—was in reference to the abortive negotiations which took place between Lord Kitchener and himself in February and March 1901.

I will quote his own description of the incident. We were discussing the question then before the Allies of the suggested crippling of German trade after the War. While he was, he said, in favour of practical proposals to secure British trade against

¹ During the later stages of the American Civil War the Confederates were in much the same straits as Brits and had largely to depend on the enemy for their resources.

On one occasion, it is said, a Detachment, almost foot-bare for lack of shoes, captured a large consignment of boots. But to their great disappointment the boots were shoddy wear, and their plight soon became as bad as before. Naturally the "Rebs" were disgusted; so they sent a message to the nearest Yankee Commander to inform him of the occurrence, and to request that steps should be taken against the fraudulent contractor, and that a more lasting quality of shoe leather should in future be supplied.

aggressive or unjust competition, on the part of the Germans after the War, or to assist the trade of the Empire, he was opposed to any attempt directed to the destruction of German trade as such, as he was sure it was a mistake to drive people to extremities. The moral he emphasised as follows. "When Lord Kitchener and I met at Middelburg my burghers were armed with mausers and we only had one round of ammunition left per man. If there had been no interference we could have arrived at a satisfactory peace for both sides. But we were told 'the people who served you must go to gaol'.¹ To that it was impossible for us to agree, and we had to break off the negotiations. Though we had no food and no waggons and no ammunition, we went on for another year. We had to go back and break our mausers and carry on our operations with the rifles and ammunition captured from the English. It cost Great Britain millions of money and many lives, and in the end we were given as good terms as we should have had at Middelburg."

For Lord Kitchener he had a great admiration, almost affection, which I believe was reciprocated. Lord Kitchener's sudden death in June 1916 was a great shock and grief to him. In the House of Assembly he read the cable which had just been received announcing Kitchener's death. He added a few words in English, but he could scarcely speak and what he did say was in a broken whisper. Kitchener was undoubtedly a great figure in South Africa, and all sections of the community had the highest respect and admiration for him. The

¹ I.e. the Cape Rebels were to be excluded from the proposed Amnesty terms.

Memorial Services which were held in various parts of the Union were very impressive.¹

V

In connection with Botha's Parliamentary and Official career one point may be noted. He was not only continuously in Office during all his Parliamentary life from the beginning of 1907 until his death in 1918, but, during the whole of that period, he was Prime Minister as well. He thus (and the same may be said of General Smuts), never, as an Executive Minister, had the advantage of sitting in Opposition—a useful experience, which enlarges the mind, expands the view, and inculcates patience.

Again, every Government accumulates a certain amount of unpopularity during its period of Office. The discredit for everything and anything that may go wrong, whether the Government or any of its individual members are responsible or no, is naturally, and in a sense properly debited to the Government; while the Opposition, though they may be foolish, can do no wrong.

A Party and its Leaders gain much from sitting occasionally in the cold shades of Opposition. Exhausted nature is recruited, the Party pulls itself together, acquires renewed confidence and gradually thirsts again for the fray, while accumulated unpopularity is sloughed off. General Botha never sojourned in the wilderness nor underwent this healthy chastening and purging.

¹ At the time of Kitchener's death I received the following touching telegram:

"Widow de la Rey wishes you kindly convey to Secretary of State her deepest sympathy at sad calamity which befell Lord Kitchener and staff; an honourable man and great friend to her late husband." Mrs. de la Rey died in September 1923.

General Botha's personality, his charm and his unaffectedness made him a remarkable figure wherever he went ; while his breadth of judgment, his store of sympathy, his knowledge of human nature together with his lucidity of mind and commonsense in council, made him a very real influence in any gathering of men. He was genuinely a modest man and never sought notoriety, and I doubt if he ever realised that he was a Statesman of world-wide reputation and influence. He was certainly entirely unspoilt by adulation.

When in 1907 he came to England on his second visit to Europe to attend an Imperial Conference, he came as one of the four Prime Ministers from South Africa—the Prime Minister of the Transvaal. Even then he made his mark. In 1911, when he again went to England, he went as Prime Minister of the Union—a big position—and carried great influence and weight in the deliberations of the Conference.

Botha was, I believe, the only Dominion Premier who did not go to England during the course of the War. The Rebellion and the German South West Campaign fully occupied the earlier days ; and, later, he was prevented by one good reason or another from leaving South Africa until after the Armistice, when he attended the Peace Conference.

In December 1916 he was invited by the Imperial Government to attend the Special War Conference of the Empire which was to meet in March 1917. Though he would much have liked to have gone, he found himself, after grave consideration, unable to accept the invitation. In his opinion and that of his Colleagues, his presence and personal influence could not, at that juncture be spared from South

Africa, especially in view of the forthcoming session of Parliament which threatened to be critical. As he said to me, it would be an affectation for him to deny that his personal influence was great and that he could get his people to do what no-one else could persuade them to do. "I am quite sure," he went on to say, "that I could, at present, do more good to assist the Empire here by seeing things through than by going to England."

As he was unable to go himself, he suggested that General Smuts, who was still in command in East Africa, should be released from his Command and take his place at the Conference. This was done, and General Smuts went to England and made for himself a remarkable position in the counsels of the Empire and did much to increase the prestige and the status of his Country.

Botha, however, appreciated the invitation and made up his mind that he would go to England at the end of the Session. In this, however, he was again disappointed and was unable to get away.

In February 1918 he was again pressed by the Imperial Government to attend a further Imperial Conference. But as he could not very well go over to England twice in a short space of time, he thought he had better reserve his visit until the end of the War, which then appeared to be in sight, and until the Peace Terms would be discussed. "As you know," Botha said to me, "I am not a talker. I have only one or two things I want to say, and Smuts (who was in England) could do the Conference as well as I could."

Indeed he was not much of a believer in Conferences as such. "I am anxious (he said to me in 1916) to do all I can to assist, but I have my doubts

as to the usefulness of a Conference. I do not believe much in talking machines." On another occasion he said to me, half chaffingly and half seriously, "if I were the Prime Minister of England I would consider the presence of the Dominion Prime Ministers at a time of great stress and strain such as this as a damned nuisance, as they would be certain to be, from my experience, fussing about without being of much practical value."

His main desire if he went to Europe was (as I informed the Secretary of State in 1916 and again in 1917) not so much to talk at a Conference as to pay a visit to the Armies in the field in France, which would have interested him enormously.

When the Armistice came in November 1918, the Imperial Government cabled for him to come to England at once in order to be present when the Peace Terms were to be discussed. He was at the time in Cape Town in a bad state of health, but he left at the first possible opportunity by a Japanese ship, only stipulating that he should be spared social functions.

He arrived in England in the middle of December 1918, and went over to Paris in January 1919 to attend the Peace Conference. Peace was signed on June 28th and he arrived back in South Africa on July 24th, and died on August 28th.

VI

General Botha carried, I understand, great weight and had a marked influence at the Peace Conferences. It was said of him that, when matters at the Conference were becoming obscured and he rose to say a few words, for he was always short, he "invariably cleared away the mists." He realised the difficulties

with which the making of Peace was beset. "Peace, you must know," he said at Cape Town on his arrival from England, "is perhaps a hundred times more difficult to make than War. Sometimes the action of a fool may start a War, but it takes the wisdom of the world to make Peace again."¹

It is known that General Botha did not entirely approve of the Peace Terms that were imposed on Germany. "The Peace Terms (he telegraphed from Paris on May 22) have now been submitted to the Germans and you will no doubt have read the summary of them. Smuts and I find it very difficult to agree to all the terms as drafted. Some seem to us impracticable of execution; others seem unnecessary and only in the nature of pin pricks. No one can accuse us of being pro-German, but our idea has been to defeat the Germans and then to give them a Peace which will result in lasting peace and one that will save the world from a similar catastrophe to that which has just passed." It is no secret that the two Union Delegates—Botha and Smuts—took every opportunity in Paris formally and informally of protesting against, and of endeavouring to obtain some modification of certain conditions.

From the beginning they entertained grave doubts whether they could sign the Peace terms as drafted; and the position was one of extraordinary difficulty for them. After grave consideration however Botha decided to sign, as he did not think it would be right for him to stand outside; while his signature to the Treaty would be an outward and visible sign of the new Status of the Union of South Africa in

¹ July 24th 1919 speech on arrival from England at the Cape City Hall Reception.

the Empire and Internationally, and it was also necessary to enable the Union to become an initial member of the League of Nations. Moved by the same motives General Smuts also finally signed the Treaty though he thought it well to issue a Memorandum in which he detailed his objections to some of its provisions.

One incident at the Peace Conference illumines Botha's character. "In the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on June 28th, the German representatives were called on to sign the Peace Treaty with its inevitable humiliation. General Botha surveyed the scene and wrote on his agenda paper the following words: 'God's judgments will be applied with justice to all peoples under the new sun, and we shall persevere in prayer that they may be applied by mankind in charity and peace and a Christian spirit. To-day I look back in thought to May 31, 1902.'"¹

In a message on leaving England in July 1919 Botha declared that "Peace must not be marred. Vengeance might well be left in the Higher Hand. Let it be a great privilege to shew mercy to the vanquished enemy, if he, in turn, shews himself truly prepared by deed, rather than by word, to confess his faults and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

¹ The date of the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging. The quotation is from the speech of General Smuts at General Botha's funeral.

PART III

POLICY

I

IN the Biographical chapter it was noted that from the moment that Louis Botha began to take a part in politics in his early days, he was opposed to the unsympathetic and repressive policy of President Kruger directed against the Uitlanders, and stood for fair dealing between the two white races and for the obliteration of racial feeling. He opposed the Ultimatum of October 1899 and recorded his vote against it.

The war which followed submerged for the time being all other questions. Though, on its termination, he felt it impossible for him to take a share in the responsibilities or activities of Administration under Crown Colony Government, his policy then, as always, was to bring about friendly relations and co-operation between the 'old' and the 'new' populations in the Transvaal.

Yet, when the period of Provisional Government and of re-construction came to an end on December 1st, 1906, and Responsible Government came into being in the Transvaal, his refusal of Coalition with the official section of the British, who represented at least half the population, and the formation by him of a Cabinet composed of his own supporters, appeared on the face of it to run con-

trary to this policy. But, as Prime Minister he soon showed by his action and by his public declarations that he stood for the cordial relationship of Dutch and British, and the feeling of uneasiness on the part of the latter gradually gave place to one of confidence in his fair-mindedness and integrity.

Then, later, when the question of closer connection between the four Colonies arose, he welcomed and encouraged the tentative proposals, and at the Convention of 1908-9 he strongly supported Union mainly on the ground that it would be a great step towards the consolidation and the co-operation of the two white races.

At the Election for the First Union Parliament in October 1910, he, as Prime Minister, placed the consolidation of the Union and Racial conciliation in the forefront of his programme; a policy to which he endeavoured steadily to adhere throughout the life of that Parliament.

During the first four years of Union and during the four and a half years of the War he, as Prime Minister, never wavered in his desire to bring about a better understanding and a more complete assimilation between the two white races.

In 1911 at an "Eighty Club" Luncheon in London he referred to the gradual disappearance of racialism, which then appeared to be taking place. "We only ask (he said) for time and to be left alone, and then we will shew you what wonders we can do in that part of the British Empire." Unfortunately, time was not forthcoming, and South Africa was not left alone. Only three years later the baneful effect of the Great War, called a halt and cruelly shook these sanguine expectations.

"Botha had a vision—a vision of a great Afri-

kander nation—not an English or a Dutch Afrikaner nation, but just one great Afrikaner nation. Others had had visions before him. Cecil Rhodes had seen a vision of a great British South Africa, and Kruger had had a vision of a Dutch South Africa. But it was left to Louis Botha to see another vision—the greatest vision of all—of a South Africa which would embrace both, a South Africa formed of both sections of the White population of their Country. And it did not remain a vision merely. It was Botha's life ideal; it was his ambition; it was his highest ideal. He always remained a true son of his people, a people he loved and worked for, but always he had that great ideal before him, that great object of making one great people of the white sections of the population of South Africa.”¹

Botha's fixed policy was to let the dead past bury its dead, and to look forward rather than to look back. “We have (he said) scalped each other in the past, but have now buried the hatchet.”

“If every man in South Africa,” he once declared, “has to go about with his past on his back, then all I can say is God help South Africa! Who has not made mistakes?”

“Both British and Dutch,” he exclaimed, “have much to forgive and much to forget, but they are both Christian Nations whose duty it is to forgive and forget.” As illustrating this particular view, Botha was fond of repeating a story about his beloved friend Senator ‘Rooi Josua’ (Red Joshua) Joubert, to whom he was devoted and whom he used to call the “Morning Star” because during

¹ General Smuts in moving the Address with reference to General Botha's death in the House of Assembly on September 5th 1919.

the South African War 'Rooi Josua' was always up and in the field before anyone else. Joubert not only lost an arm, but had his farm burnt down and everything destroyed in the war. "When the war was over," related Botha, "Joubert and his wife came back to the farm and lived in a most awful hut which they made out of corrugated iron, two bits leaning one against the other, like a house of cards. Rooi Josua was a very religious man, and as soon as he could he went over to see his neighbour, a 'hands-upper' who had been mainly instrumental in the destruction of his farm. But when he got to the house they would not open the door. He saw the neighbour's wife through the window, so he went round to the back, came in by the kitchen and found the neighbour and his wife in the front room. He went up and held out his left hand—his right arm was shot off—and said, 'Revenge belongs to God, not to man, so we must shake hands and be friends.' "

"Remember (Botha once said) that there are two Races—in order to take care not to hurt each other's susceptibilities. Forget that there are two Races—in order to combine in one Nationality." He was convinced that the best hope, indeed the only hope, for his country was that the two white races, Dutch and British, whether born in South Africa or coming in from outside and making it their home, should live together on terms of friendship and of co-operation; for come what may, they had got to live together for ever and aye. Neither race could be predominant, neither of them could say "voetsak" to the other.¹ He used to

¹ An expletive universally used by South Africans to strange dogs—a powerful and effective version of "go away."

reinforce his argument by quoting General Piet Joubert's—perhaps somewhat enigmatical—saying “Daar is nie plek in Zuid Africa ver twee baas” (there is no room in South Africa for two masters).

II

Louis Botha—himself Huguenot-Dutch—shared with his fellow Dutch Afrikaners their simple tastes, their tenacity, their deep religious feeling, their passionate longing for personal and political freedom. He was, nevertheless, able fully to appreciate the merits and the strength of the British character and of the British Race, and to hold them in sincere regard. On leaving England in July 1919, he paid a tribute to the Government and to the people of Great Britain. “From the Premier downwards, in all quarters (he said) I found predominant a spirit of co-operation and sympathy for South Africa. It fills me with encouragement.”

At the same time he was—not unnaturally—by no means blind to the faults of the British, their prejudices and their obstinacy. These not infrequently jarred upon his susceptibility; and he was not slow to complain to me of what he thought to be inconsiderate speech or action on the part of the British section, sometimes even by those in responsible positions, which played into the hands of his opponents and aggravated his difficulties.

Throughout the War, and afterwards, Botha's position was beset with difficulties—ignorance, suspicion, misunderstanding and misrepresentation were rife. The wonder was that in all this troubled water he was able to steer safely between Scylla and Charybdis; to ride out the hurricane and keep his ship safely afloat.

On the one hand, he had to contend with the acute differences between those of his own race, which did much to weaken his power and influence ; while, on the other, he was humiliated, disturbed and distressed by the knowledge that there existed a feeling of doubt as to the integrity and loyalty both of himself and of the Dutch generally, which, however mistakenly, was genuinely held by a section of the British population.

It is almost incredible to recall the rumours and stories that were believed by certain people, and this at a time when Botha and his Government, and the majority of those of Dutch descent, were actively engaged in great Imperial Services at the request of the Imperial Government. For instance it was seriously alleged by one of some standing, and otherwise sane, "that the reason the Government obtained mauser rifles and armed the burghers with them for the German South West Campaign, was that this rifle was of the same pattern and the same bore as the German rifle, and thus the burghers, as soon as they got to German South West, could and would join the Germans without any difficulty arising in regard to ammunition." As shown elsewhere the real facts of the matter were that the Union Government did their best to obtain, but were unable to obtain the ordinary service rifle, and that the mauser (Portuguese) rifles were secured by the Secretary of State with great difficulty from abroad.

After the Rebellion an English Doctor confided to the unwilling ears of 'Her Excellency' that he was in despair as to the future, for he understood that "it was very fortunate that Botha's Burghers had not had to do any fighting, because

if they had come in contact with the rebels, it was quite understood that they would all have gone over and joined them." The Rebellion was of course, suppressed mainly by the burgher forces, and the bulk of the casualties were amongst those of Dutch extraction.

No wonder that Botha was warmly indignant with those, happily a small minority, who during the War aggressively flaunted the flag or sneered at the Dutch as disloyal or half hearted. He deplored the dangerous mischief that was thereby caused in various ways, and which did much to irritate and estrange his people, to weaken his influence, and to accentuate racial feeling. He roundly condemned as equally pernicious the conduct and language of those who as persistently flaunted their nationality and expressed their antipathy to the British connection. "The extremists," he said publicly on one occasion, "on both sides are the difficulty and the danger. They keep alive the spirit of enmity and suspicion. That is what we have to battle against, else we never shall secure harmony between the two races, and without harmony South Africa cannot progress."

He was especially emphatic that the two races must be treated and treat each other on terms of real and absolute equality. As he once said (in August 1915) at a South African Party Conference: "Let both sections of the white population, while maintaining their own language and traditions, mutually respect each other's language and traditions, but let them in the spirit of true co-operation weld with each other."

To attain such an ideal he was ready to sacrifice much, to run the risk of severing personal friend-

ships, even of dividing his own People and his own Party.

III

To Botha the Peace of Vereeniging was a binding engagement which must in honour be kept both in spirit and in letter, more especially as the Imperial Government on its part had never in any respect gone back on its engagements, had not only carried out its undertakings but had actually anticipated them.

The announcement by the British Government in the King's Speech in February 1906 within a short time after their accession to power, that they intended at once and without reservation to grant Responsible Government to the Transvaal and to the Free State, profoundly moved him. Botha (as described to me by one of his old comrades-in-arms, who was with him at the time) was greatly surprised and touched. "We must accept it," he declared, "with open arms. It is a most generous offer and we must work to make it a success. It greatly wipes out the past."

He often observed to me how much he appreciated the courage of the British Government, who, in spite of the denunciation that they were undertaking "a dangerous, audacious and reckless experiment" took the risk within four years of the termination of the war of transferring the whole Executive power—civil and military—into the hands of the population of the two former Republics, when in the one case at least half the voters, and in the other the overwhelming majority of the population, had only recently been in arms against Great Britain.

Botha, on one occasion, detailed to a friend an account of a conversation he had had in reference to

the early grant of Self-government to the Transvaal with a Statesman who was violently opposed to it. "I said to him, look here, I said, if you give it, you will put a whole population on your side, who are all now hostile against you."

The British Government by their action and the trust they thus showed in the 'old population,' had in his view placed his fellow countrymen and himself under a debt of obligation which they were bound to reciprocate to the full and in the same spirit.

General Botha consequently ever held "C.B." and Mr. Asquith in great admiration, and always spoke to me of them both with grateful warmth for their action in spontaneously initiating and carrying through their undertaking; and that subsequently, and throughout, they had been specially friendly to South Africa. At the time of rumours of a break-up of the Asquith Government he was full of sympathy for him, and said to my wife, "I felt so sorry for him—so worried for him, that I sent him a cable this morning. I said 'keep courage.'"

He held Lord Grey of Fallodon also in high regard. "You could never (he said to me) be many minutes in his company without realising and recognising his transparent honesty and straightforwardness. It appealed to you at once."

Further, General Botha felt strongly that, speaking generally, the attitude and the action of the British elements in South Africa after 1902, in accepting "with wonderful loyalty" the grant of Responsible Government in 1906 and the Settlement of Union in 1910, as well as their acquiescence in and the support they freely gave to a dominantly "Dutch" Government, had done much also to wipe out the

past, and to render the engagements into which his people had entered even more sacred and binding than they otherwise would have been.

IV

In 1911 Botha had denounced the idea of "Optional Neutrality." "He had been accused (he said) of stating that South Africa need not take any part in an Imperial War. There is no such thing as optional neutrality." He went on to say that "should the day ever dawn when the common Fatherland is attacked, Dutch and English Afri-canders would be found defending the Fatherland to the very last." To him, therefore, when War came, neutrality was impossible.

In his Speech to his constituents at Bank in the Transvaal soon after the War began (September 28th 1914) he thus defined his attitude. He was animated, he said, by a true and sincere love of his people, and stood back for none in his patriotism. "There were people (he went on to say) who asserted that South Africa should remain neutral. He was not a lawyer, but simply a farmer who used his common sense, and who desired to lead his people honestly and truly according to his best lights. To him, using his common sense, all this talk of neutrality appeared to be the biggest nonsense he had ever listened to." "In the past (he added) the people of South Africa had said to the British Government, 'Trust us and we shall prove ourselves worthy of that trust.' Would they now, when for the first time they were called on to do so, when for the first time they were faced with great troubles, stand aside? Surely that was not like the people of this country with their great history! To-day they must prove to

the British Empire which was watching them, that they were worthy and more than worthy of the trust which had been reposed in them, and by doing so they would create for themselves a greater future than would otherwise be possible. Therefore he could give no other answer to the request of the Imperial Government than 'We will assist you as you desire in German South West.' . . . The British Government (he concluded) must be able to look straight into our eyes and be able to see what is in our minds."

On another occasion he pointed out the obvious qualification—"How could the older section of the people (he said) be expected to have the same enthusiasm for the War or for the British Empire as the English Afrikaner. But I desire to emphasise that they could not be accused of disloyalty if perhaps they did not display that great enthusiasm. And no one would blame them because of that. While as regards honesty and loyalty they stood back for no one."

In the course of his reply (March 28th, 1918), on the debate in the House of Assembly on the Address to Sir Douglas Haig and the British Army, he summed up the faith that was in him: "I say openly, Mr. Speaker, as I have done before, that I shall never approve of the manner in which our two little Republics have been treated. I have said over and over again that the two Republics were done a grievous wrong in those days gone by, and shall always condemn what was done to them. But let us look at what has been born out of the great misery of those days. A Treaty was signed at the end of the War, and our honour is involved in that Treaty. I declare, Mr. Speaker, that I shall do

my utmost to uphold that Treaty, that I shall always stand by my signature to that Treaty, and I shall never do anything which may have the result of the honour of the people I come from, the people I love, being trampled upon. . . . I intend dealing honestly and straightforwardly by the British Government, and I shall always stand by my oath under the Treaty of Vereeniging. . . . Yes, Mr. Speaker, I shall always disapprove of the wrong done to the two Republics but that does not mean that I cannot be true to my oath; out of the history of the past, truly a dark history in many patches, a great united South Africa has now emerged—only a child to-day, but a child to which we have to give attention in order to bring about full development and greatness.” He concluded by saying that “some people seem to think that the Government ought to shirk their responsibilities, but surely the Government was there to give a good lead, to accept responsibility and not to shirk responsibility.”

v

When unrest began to show itself he was greatly disturbed and distressed; and, as it developed into an armed revolt, his sensitive nature and his passionate feelings of honour were profoundly wounded. The conspiracy which led up to the Rebellion, and the action of the rebels, constituted to his mind a distinct breach and repudiation of the National word solemnly given; while it savoured of treachery to South Africa itself, and threw a slur on his people as a whole.

The defection of Beyers and of Maritz, Officers of the Union Defence Force, cut him to the quick.

The action of de Wet, for whom he had a warm regard, he was unable to understand. "My satisfaction," he telegraphed to me, after the Rebellion was suppressed, "at the restoration of peace within our borders is mingled with feeling of deep sadness at the miserable fall which my old comrade-in-arms has brought upon himself."

"I think I may say," he ejaculated at Pretoria (December 18th 1914), "that this is the most difficult time we have ever gone through in South Africa, and for me it is certainly the most painful I have ever gone through. Only a deep sense of duty and the assistance of both races have enabled me to come through these difficult days. Without that support, so generously accorded—without that general support it would have been impossible to carry out the work."

The divisions amongst the Dutch-speaking people before the War, divisions which the War only accentuated, were to him a matter of profound distress and grief. He was intensely sensitive to personal attacks when the purity of his motives was misunderstood or mis-represented; and felt deeply wounded when he was accused of insincerity or of the betrayal of his country or of his people. These divisions among "my own people" were very grievous to him, and he especially deplored in private talk that they should have been due to the action he had felt it right to take in carrying out the policy which he had so greatly at heart.

The War itself and the subsequent happenings were, as we have seen, accompanied by much unrest and sharp conflict of opinion. The position taken up by the Prime Minister and his Colleagues—most loyal to him throughout—while it received the

general support of the British section of the Community and, of a large proportion of the Dutch-speaking population, met with profound hostility from a section of the 'old population.'

The first serious fissure in the ranks of those of Dutch descent had taken place before war came ; a fissure which widened into a chasm under the pressure of the War and of the Rebellion. Bitter feeling and animosity were aroused ; which were directed mainly against Louis Botha as the head of the Government and the most influential man amongst the Dutch.

If the European conflict had been short, sharp and decisive, it is probable that its disturbing effects in South Africa would gradually have passed away.

In the earlier stages and when it was generally believed that the contest would not be greatly prolonged, General Botha lived, as he often told me, in the sanguine hope that while the baneful influences of the War and of the Rebellion would last 'for the duration of the war,' on the day on which a satisfactory peace was signed the difficulties of the Country would begin to clear away, and something like re-union would again be brought about between the two now acutely divided sections of the Dutch population. Similar views were, I think, held generally by the leading men in the Union. But the prolongation of the war for over four long years, aggravated the antagonism and bitterness that had been aroused from the very beginning. Each additional month and each additional year accentuated these differences, and the clash of opinion sank so deep and became so ingrained, that it would not yield to treatment ; and Peace itself came too late to act as a solvent.

By that time, indeed, the original cause of offence and of controversy had broadened out in other directions, and the Republican and Independence agitation which had been evolved, was of far greater moment, and divided still more acutely and fundamentally the two Dutch-speaking sections.

Botha, profoundly disturbed and distressed at the acute and formidable divisions among those of his own race would have welcomed "hereeniging" (re-union) if it had been possible without the surrender of essential conditions, but it was not possible.

I doubt if General Botha, hopeful up to the time of his death, ever fully realised the extent and the depth of the division which had taken place in the South African Party, or fully recognised the growth and popularity of the antagonism to his policy ; nor did he, I think, realise to the full how greatly his personal influence over a certain section of his former followers had waned. The mistrust, often quite unreasoning, that was felt for him on the part of many of the Dutch, especially in the back-veld districts, was to him incomprehensible.

As an illustration of the feeling that had been inculcated in the minds of some of the old Boers, I may quote an authentic story that was told me. At President Steyn's funeral a back-velder came up to another Boer and said with pride, "King Edward himself won't have such a fine funeral as this." "King Edward is dead." "Dead is he, who then is King now?" "King George." "What! another Englishman! that's Botha again."

This represented of course only one aspect of the feeling already described which went much further and far deeper.

Botha was, as we have seen, greatly disturbed at the result of the General Election of October 1915, which took place a little more than a year after the War had begun. The numbers of his own Party were seriously reduced and the recently formed Nationalist Party came back in formidable force.

He did not live to see the election of March 1920, which marked still more significantly and ominously the far reaching division which had taken place in the Dutch-speaking population. His influence, if he had been alive, would probably have been potent enough to make some slight, though not material difference in the result. Be this as it may, there is little doubt, that the election, if he had lived to see it, would have been a disheartening blow, for it would have clearly brought home to him how deep the cleavage in his Party had gone, and how greatly his influence had waned.

But if Louis Botha became separated from and lost his influence over one section of those of Dutch descent, his prestige and his influence over his own followers increased rather than diminished, and their devotion and affection for him were only the more firmly cemented by all that occurred. This devotion and affection were to him until the day of his death a source of immense pride, satisfaction and consolation.

Though feeling most acutely the split in his Party, and especially that it should have been in any way due to the policy he had adopted, he never, I feel sure, looked back with regret to the action he had taken either in 1912 in his differences with General Hertzog, nor again in connection with the War and the Rebellion. He felt convinced that he had pursued the right course and had followed the

path of duty and of honour, and he would, without hesitation, have done the same again if similar conditions had arisen.

VI

As emphasised in the Introduction it has been my anxious desire in writing this book to avoid controversial matter affecting the party politics of the Union. I will touch therefore very lightly on the Independence or Republican movement in South Africa.

I am merely stating a well-known fact that the position and attitude which the Prime Minister took up from its inception, and consistently held until his death in regard to this movement, as it gradually emerged from an Unauthorised Programme into a recognised Policy, was one of uncompromising opposition.

General Botha often publicly declared that in his opinion to tamper with the Constitution of the Union or the connection with the British Empire by "cutting the painter" would be both dishonourable and inexpedient. In his view there was no half-way house in the matter. None of his Party, as he impressed upon them both publicly and privately, "must play with the question, they must take a straight and strong line against it, as the policy was contrary to the honour and pledged word of South Africa, would be a declaration of war against the British, and if pressed to a definite issue would inevitably mean a bloody civil war."

At the South African Party Conference at Bloemfontein in August 1915, he claimed that "As regards broad policy our Party stands exactly where they stood years ago. Five years ago the white people

of the Union entered into an agreement signed by their representatives at the National Convention. The compact said that they were to have one united People and one Country. A new day seemed to have dawned on this sorely-tried country, and the whole people seemed inspired with a new spirit of co-operation and national unity. My own Party expressed its fundamental principles in the words of clauses 2 and 3 of their Programme of principles—the development of a South African spirit of National unity and self-reliance by the close union of the two sections of the population. And with that object Constitutional equality would also be safeguarded and maintained, and all causes of estrangement and misunderstanding between the various sections of the population would be avoided. These words allowed of no ambiguity. There was no thought in these words of the pernicious two-stream policy of which they had heard so much, and of which the first fruit had already been seen in the Rebellion. With the Union the people agreed, and decided to bid farewell to the old lines of cleavage. That decision was clearly laid down in the fundamental principles of their Programme.”

VII

The somewhat ardent adulation of the British press, especially during the months following the declaration of War, was more embarrassing than helpful to the Prime Minister of the Union. However sincere and well meant the praise, it seemed to lend some colour to the insidious suggestion that he was too subservient to the British Government. Such a suggestion he would strongly deny. He would maintain that the Union, as a Dominion and

a member of the British Empire—and in honour bound so to remain—had duties and responsibilities, but that her special interests were of prime importance and were not to be sacrificed at the call or instigation of any other part of the Empire.

“ I could,” as he said to me when discussing the Imperial Conference of 1917, “ neither agree to curtail the rights of the inhabitants of South Africa in any way nor to place the freedom of my people in bondage, and I have always believed in the freedom of the British Flag to establish unity and loyalty.”

As a matter of fact there was no one who was less of an Imperialist in the old “ Imperial Federation ” sense of the term. Before the War he had declared (November 1913) that when he had attended the Imperial Conference he had “ opposed any Federal system with a Supreme Parliament as strongly as he could,” for he “ would never tolerate anything which affected South African autonomy.” While he believed that it was to the interest of his country and of his own race, as well as an obligation of honour, that the Imperial connection should be maintained, and that the Union should remain an integral part of the British Empire, he was convinced that the Empire could only endure if it were founded on the freest individual liberty of action of each component part. In his view to trammel and fetter by artificial bonds, under whatever specious or high-sounding name, was the surest way of bringing the marvellous Commonwealth to an end.

In 1917 it was proposed that the Imperial War Conference of that year should not only take up the various questions connected with the war, but that

it should also consider the question of the relations between the Dominions and the Empire both Constitutional and Economic. General Botha was very much opposed to this suggestion on the ground that, while the glamour and excitement, the strain and stress of the war continued, neither of these questions, especially the constitutional aspect, could be discussed with the requisite calmness and leisure, and with that regard to the proportionate importance of the various questions involved which was essential for their due consideration. He urged also that the solution of the question did not really press, and that no harm, but considerable advantage, would be gained by postponing the discussion until the upheaval caused by the war had subsided.

In the end the Union Government informed the Imperial Government that as they were anxious not to hamper the latter in any way, they would not raise a formal objection to the discussion of these questions, but that they kept themselves quite free in regard to them, and would instruct their representatives to press strongly that both these questions, and especially the Constitutional question, would be much more suitably and usefully considered after Peace than through the distorted perspective of War.

These views prevailed, and the Imperial War Conference in April 1917 adopted a Resolution—which stated that “The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the re-adjustment of the Constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important to be dealt with during the war, and that it should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference summoned after the cessation of hostilities.”

At the same time the Conference placed on record their views in regard to the basis on which such readjustment should be carried out, and which incidentally negatived the idea of a Federal Imperial Parliament or Executive. The terms of the Resolution were very acceptable to General Botha and he was entirely in accord with the views it expressed.¹

General Botha attached great importance to the fundamental change in the relations between the Imperial Government and the Dominions which came about during the War, and which was partly consequent upon the War and the assistance given and the sacrifices made by the Dominions, and partly due to natural economic and political development.

Before the War the Dominions enjoyed full powers of administration, legislation and of sovereignty in respect of all their own internal affairs; but they had little or no voice on questions connected with Foreign Relations and possessed no International Status. At the Peace Conference in 1919, however, in addition to the Imperial Representatives, each Dominion was separately represented on an equal footing with the other Allied and Associated

¹ The Resolution was as follows: (April 1917) "The Imperial War Conference deem it their duty however, to place on record their view that any such re-adjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of Self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous Nations of an Imperial Commonwealth and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognise the right of the Dominions and of India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action founded on consultation as the several Governments may determine."

States, great and small; and, together with the Representatives of the other Powers, signed the Peace Treaty. At the Peace Session of 1919 (which General Botha did not live to see) the Union Parliament, at the specific request of the Imperial Government, separately authorised the ratification of the Peace Treaty. The Dominions, moreover, were individually parties to the Covenant of the League of Nations, and became Members of the League on an equal footing with all other Nations. The International Status of the Dominions inside the British Empire was thus not only recognised by the Imperial Government, but by the co-signatories of the other States.

This position was fully accepted, indeed was welcomed by the Imperial Government and British Statesmen; and it was stated with authority, that "the last vestige of anything in the nature of a subordinate status in relationship will have to disappear." The Self-governing States forming parts of the British Empire are thus in equal partnership, and are bound to the Imperial Government and to each other by common ties, common interests and common defence; and in external affairs by full opportunity of consultation and expression of their views.

General Botha was very proud of the improved Status conferred on the Union of South Africa. On his return from England, speaking at Cape Town on July 25th 1919, he said "The position of South Africa to-day was that it was recognised among the Nations of the World on a basis of equality. For them in South Africa that was the most valuable asset of the Peace Treaty. There were many things of which I heartily disapproved in the Treaty. But there was one thing of which I approved, because

in that Document for the first time International recognition was given of the Status of the British Dominions; and South Africa would rank with other Nations as an equal, and has not to look up to anyone as a superior." This point he emphasised at Pretoria a few days later—"The recognition of our Status next to the establishment of the Union is one of the milestones in our history, and was a natural result of that policy of Union which was begun in 1908."

"I return to Africa," he said on leaving England in July 1919, "happy in the knowledge that my native land emerges from this terrible conflict with its Status raised and its destiny assured. I carry away with me also the conviction that of all the peoples in the Alliance the peoples of the British Empire have played a greater part than any. This was in my judgment primarily a French war. It was not a British war essentially. Nevertheless the British people made the war their own, and so saved not only France but also civilisation itself. I go back to South Africa more firmly convinced than ever that the mission of the British Empire now, and in the time to come, lies along the path of freedom and high ideals. Britain is the cornerstone upon which our civilisation must rest. It largely depends upon her action and her spirit whether the new-born League of Nations will be a success or not. The essence of the League of Nations lies in the ideal brotherhood, in making this World a better place to live in. In the League the British Empire will continue its historic rôle and play the part of the big brother."

PART IV

AN APPRECIATION

MY wife saw a great deal of General Botha while we were in South Africa ; and in November 1918 she sailed on the same ship, a Japanese ship, that took him to England, when at very short notice he went to Europe to attend the Peace Conference.

The voyage lasted for over three weeks, and as there were, besides General Botha's party and herself, only a few other passengers, she had special opportunities of seeing much of the General and of Mrs. Botha.

Some of the stories that he then told her are incorporated elsewhere in the book. But I have asked her to attempt to describe General Botha as he appeared to her ; and to put on record one or two personal touches taken from her letters or diary.

I

Personal Characteristics

General Botha's appearance was the reflection of his personality ; he was a very big man and he had a great character. He stood out in size, height and girth beyond the normal, and was a very striking figure. He looked what he was—a born leader of men. He was always a noticeable figure in any assembly of people, and it might be said of

him as it was of a Highland Chief, "wherever he sat *there* was the head of the table."

In build he resembled many of the South African Dutch, especially the farmers. But he was dark in complexion, and his features were more French than Dutch. His eyes and his "circumflex" eyebrows were the most noticeable feature of his face. His eyes were extraordinarily bright and full of life, and nothing escaped them. I used to watch him playing Bridge—a game he loved and which he played very well. He sat looking vast and completely absorbed, but he gave an impression of intense mental alertness and of never losing an opportunity.

The late General van Deventer was also a very big man and I once asked him if he were bigger than General Botha or General Botha bigger than he was. After consideration, he replied thoughtfully: "I am longer, but he is thicker." An outstanding characteristic was the combination of great size and height with amazing quickness. It was interesting to watch his skill at games, especially on board ship in a confined space; no one could have been swifter or more "on the spot" if they had been half his height and size.

His face was very mobile and full of expression, and his quick response to any appeal or emotion was reflected at once, whether it were annoyance or pleasure, gratification or worry—he was transparent in his betrayal of what he felt.

This was very noticeable in the House of Assembly. I used to watch his face and always imagined I knew from his expression what was being said, even when I could not understand much Dutch. If a beloved supporter and friend were speaking, the

General used to look radiant with pleasure and delight. But if he considered that he was being unfairly attacked or misrepresented, his face darkened and his annoyance and acute sense of the other side not playing the game was very obvious. If the Nationalists were making bitter speeches and were raising hot and angry feeling among the South African Party, the General used to look profoundly unhappy, as if he could not bear the consciousness of division between his own people. He was, perhaps, too sensitive, and felt things too deeply for any real enjoyment of public life.

His swift and certain response to a call on his good nature, added greatly to his personal attraction. His understanding sympathy with sorrow and anxiety can never be forgotten by anyone who experienced it.

General Botha had perfect manners, he was the soul of courtesy to all and sundry, and his geniality and warm welcome gave great point to his entertainments, both Official and private. He possessed in a supreme degree what the French call "*la politesse du cœur*," and every individual whom he welcomed must have realised the strength of his feeling of goodwill to all.

He and Mrs. Botha often came to luncheon or to dinner with us, and I remember delightful dinner parties with them at Groote Schuur; luncheon parties at the House of Assembly to meet various distinguished visitors to the Cape; his daughter's Wedding—all illumined by the General's hospitality and warm-hearted courtesy.

His conversation was agreeable and full of individuality, and his slightly foreign accent when speaking English, and exotic expressions added

character and colour to all he said, and often emphasised his view more forcibly than the most idiomatic English could have done. He had an admirable way of relating events that had happened, especially in connection with the South African War. His descriptions were extraordinarily vivid—the people and the places seemed to materialize as he was speaking, and he talked with great fervour and fire.

He was incapable of pettiness, he never said ungenerous things, though he could be very severe. But the most outstanding features of his conversation were his breadth of judgment, his supreme common-sense and his humanity, or rather humanness. He had the saving grace of humour, and would interpolate a dry remark with great effect.

II

From Letters and Diary

“ I feel how lucky I am to be seeing so much of General Botha, and I am daily more impressed by his power, charm and simplicity. I don't mean that he is not very astute about politics and such like, but he has an innate simplicity about him which is perfectly delightful. For instance the way he spent Sunday is most characteristic.

“ In spite of the tropical heat the General appeared in his Sunday clothes at breakfast, with a very small ‘ Daily Light ’ in his huge hand—which he read on deck with intervals of sleep till luncheon. After luncheon he produced a Dutch book about missionaries in Nyassaland and studied that till he fell asleep. After tea a nice young man going home to Edinburgh to study as a medical

missionary, suggested with some courage that he should hold a Service in the minute 'social hall' (Anglicè 'saloon'). To this we of course agreed, and attended. General Botha followed the service most devoutly, and was absorbed in the little Address at the end, sitting by Mrs. Botha with her hand in his, and kneeling down in a very cramped space with great discomfort. Their complete devotion to each other is wonderful, he does not really like her to be out of his sight."

"The General manages to take an immense quantity of exercise. He gets up at six and walks for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours followed by the devoted Sir David Graaff. He plays quoits for two hours every morning and again after tea, and, since we have been in the tropics, and a big sea water bathing tank has been put on to the lower deck, he bathes twice a day and stops for ages in the water. He looks really very well, and is in very good spirits."

"The General has to be very careful over his diet, and every mouthful is eyed by Sir David Graaff, and Mrs. Botha would do the same if he were not hidden from her by an immense floral arrangement from Groote Schuur. It is a real case of 'the Devil was sick.' He was very good at first, but yesterday he felt splendidly well, after hours of deck quoits and an hour and a half's walk before breakfast. So at dinner, he broke away and exceeded in preserved ginger, and defied Mrs. Botha and Sir David in a most killing way, and said if she forbade him ginger he would refuse to walk before breakfast. She was really very much vexed with him, so after dinner, he came up to her and said: 'Smile at me

again, Annie,' to which she replied, ' I shall certainly do nothing of the sort if you are so tiresome about your food, Louis.' "

" His tact and consideration are strong characteristics. His courtesy to the Japanese Captain and Officers, his honest and outspoken appreciation of all they did for his comfort and well-being, and his charming speeches of farewell to them at the end of the voyage, are all very clear in my memory.

" There was one very trying episode when two of the Officers kindly offered to sing an old Japanese song. We all said how much we should enjoy it, and gathered round the piano in the ' Social Hall ' to listen. It was a very surprising way of singing to those unaccustomed to Oriental music, and I regret to confess that in consequence we were overtaken by uncontrollable fits of laughter which were agonizing and could not be entirely suppressed. General and Mrs. Botha listened with deep attention but without a smile. They had been just as much amused as we were ; but said afterwards they had been afraid of hurting the feelings of the Japanese who were trying to entertain us ; which made us all dreadfully ashamed of ourselves."

" It was noticeable that the General was immensely touched by his popularity with the English people ; and he was fond of telling stories about the kindness and indulgence of the London Police. He described in a very amusing way how during the Coronation of 1911, the police were always very kind to him, passing him and Mrs. Botha at once through all sorts of barriers, and letting him off fines for exceeding the speed limit in his motor. On

one occasion coming out of the Abbey, they let him through and pushed back the Prime Minister of another Dominion. This made the latter furious—no wonder—and General Botha left him raging, saying that his Country had been insulted, he should report it to the Government, etc., etc.

“ Another time, he was stopped outside London for going too fast. When he gave his name to the police they let him go on, but they summoned an unfortunate colleague who was just behind him, and he was fined. The General invariably added ‘ And I expect I had fought against many of these police.’ ”

CHAPTER VII

BOTHA AND SMUTS

THE friendship of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts dated from about 1898. Botha had not long before become a Member of the First Volksraad of the South African Republic, and in that year Smuts, then quite a young man and eight years his junior in age,¹ became State Attorney in the Government, Paul Kruger being President.

Botha, as already mentioned, belonged to the Progressive Party in the Transvaal, while Smuts was a member of the Government. At the beginning of their friendship, therefore, they were in somewhat different camps, but the South African War which followed soon afterwards obliterated all differences.

At the beginning of the war they were under different Commands; and, later, Smuts' main task was to scour the Cape Province with the object of persuading the Dutch of that Province to throw in their lot with the Republics.

At the Conference at Vereeniging the two worked together for Peace. During the troublous time of Crown Colony Government in the Transvaal they acted in unison. When, after Responsible Government had been conferred on the Transvaal, Botha formed his first Cabinet, Smuts became Colonial Secretary, the second place in the Cabinet; and the

¹ Botha was born in 1862 Smuts in 1870.

two inseparable friends became trusted colleagues. When Botha formed the first Union Cabinet Smuts took the Portfolios of Interior, of Mines and of Defence, the last a comparatively small affair in those days.

The very affectionate intimacy which existed between the two struck me very much.

Botha, on one occasion, after the Rebellion was over, said of Smuts: "Nobody can ever appreciate sufficiently the great work General Smuts has done—greater than that of any other man throughout this unhappy period. At his post day and night, his brilliant intellect, his calm judgment, his amazing energy and his undaunted courage have been assets of inestimable value to the Union in her hour of trial."

In his moving speech at General Botha's funeral, General Smuts referred to their friendship. "I have spoken (he said) of Louis Botha as Commander and Statesman, but how can I speak of him in the greater quality of Friend, of the friend beyond compare which he was? After an intimate friendship and unbroken co-operation extending over twenty-one years, during which we came as close together as it is ever given to men to come, I have the right to call him the largest, most beautiful, sweetest soul of all my land and days."

Botha, when speaking to me of Smuts, always referred to him in terms of the deepest pride and affection, and I could see that he was obviously pleased and gratified if I happened, in referring to Smuts, to let fall a word of warm appreciation.

The terrible strain of the Great War which told heavily on nerves and strength, instead of driving

a wedge between them, brought them more closely together. They differed, no doubt, from time to time on matters of detail ; but on one occasion only during my time do I remember any really serious difference of opinion arising between them which had to be accommodated ; and the distress of both of them that such a difference of opinion could and should occur, impressed me deeply.

Physically the two were in striking contrast ; the one large and massive, the other slight and alert. In education, character, temperament and disposition almost the antipodes of one another, they were essentially complementary the one to the other.

Botha was a farmer by birth and breeding, but though his educational opportunities had been slight and he had no administrative training, he brought to bear on every question of statesmanship rare common sense and breadth of view and judgment. Smuts brought into the common stock a distinguished career of scholarship at school and College in South Africa, and at Cambridge University, a legal training, experience in administration and debate ; a brilliant intellect, an alert and lucid mind.

Botha never cared much about reading, and was always amused at Smuts' lack of interest in games. Botha habitually thought and spoke in Dutch ; Smuts was completely bilingual. The one somewhat slow in thought, but in decision possessing an almost unfailing good judgment ; the other quick in thought as well as in decision. The one conciliatory and persuasive, with a fund of unlimited patience, ready freely to discuss any question that arose with those concerned ; the other possessing remarkable driving power, but finding it perhaps easier to decide a question himself than to discuss it. At his

first meeting with his Caucus after he became Prime Minister, Smuts told them with exaggerated self-depreciation that he, unlike Botha, "had neither tact nor patience, and they must take him for what he was worth."

BUT, if unlike in upbringing, education and characteristics, they were alike in courage and resource, alike in their outlook and in an ardent love of their Country, in a desire to do the best for their own people, and in realising the essential necessity of unity and friendship between the two white races.

Botha shrank from the limelight, but Smuts always kept him in the forefront, and applied his mind and brain, not for his own personal credit and advantage but for that of his companion and friend.

They were bound together, not only by a deep personal affection, but by the most absolute and whole-hearted loyalty and harmony, and complete trust in each other. The two together formed a remarkable and effective combination.

It has been said that while Botha was the Figure-Head Smuts was 'the Power behind the Throne,'—a sort of Botha-Hindenburg to Smuts-Ludendorff. This I soon found was not the case; and it was seldom or never possible to analyse their respective work, and to assert with confidence that this contribution was Botha's and that was Smuts'.

Botha very greatly relied upon Smuts both for consultation and for decision; and the latter's absence during considerable periods of the War—first in German East from February 1916 to January 1917 and then in Europe from March 1917 to July 1919—was to Botha a prodigious void, and accentuated the sense of pressure and of responsibility.

Smuts' absence mattered less when he was in German East, for there he was in comparatively easy communication, could be kept in touch with the affairs of the Union, and could have returned at any moment if urgently required. But when he was in Europe some six thousand miles away, he was out of touch, and full explanation and consultation on such questions as arose was not possible.

When Botha's health began to fail, he more and more "missed Jannie," the companionship and helpfulness on which he relied, and he fretted, and longed for Smuts' return. At the same time he realised the great and essential work that his Colleague was doing in England, and felt that, in the circumstances, his early return could not be expected nor pressed.

The General was greatly pleased with the reception that Smuts received in England. "It satisfies (so he confided to me¹) all my pride in South Africa that a Dutch South African should be such a popular figure, and so much looked up to for his brains and military success. I cannot help feeling proud that South Africa, with its small white population, should have produced men like this."

When the two again met in London after nearly two years' separation, and after many happenings in their respective spheres of responsibility and influence, they found themselves still in complete accord on all big questions; and (as we have seen) in their view as to the lines that the Treaty of Peace ought to follow—or avoid.

¹ May 2nd, 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AND HIGH COMMISSIONER

PART I

DUTIES, FUNCTIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

THE Union of South Africa is instinct with intricate and varying problems.

It is the only part of the Empire in which there are two distinct White Races living cheek by jowl throughout the length and breadth of the land. These two white races share many mutual characteristics. Both are democratic and liberty-loving, and hold fast to their Protestantism. In their sporting instincts, in their interest in agriculture and in other ways they have much in common. They possess equally the qualities of patience and endurance, of obstinacy and stubbornness. Neither is easily baffled nor cast down; both can be led but neither can be driven. For both races South Africa holds great traditions; and their common attachment to her is deep and unswerving.

The Union is, moreover, the only Dominion in which the majority of the inhabitants are not of European descent, and in which the perplexing problems of the relations between civilized and uncivilized races have to be faced.

The Natives,¹ numbering over three to one of the Whites, live in their midst, struggling upwards, and ever more insistently asking what part they are to play in the Social System.

The Coloured folk for the most part form a separate Community of their own numbering nearly half a million—the tragedy of South Africa. These have their own claims, aims and grievances.

The presence of an Indian Community, which in Natal greatly outnumbers the Europeans, constitutes a thorny problem, not affecting South Africa alone.

And finally there is the *Bywoner*, the “Poor White,” the poverty stricken hanger-on, often unemployable, who number some eighty thousand at least—the despair of South Africa. He is mainly a product of the old days of enormous farms, the poor relation who squatted on the land, led a precarious existence and produced large families—one feckless generation has succeeded another. The presence of a black proletariat has made him scorn unskilled work; and even for that he has become unfitted.

And apart from the two-fold Racial questions—White and White, and Black and White—Provincial and Economic problems of the utmost intricacy are perpetually arising. The industrial position is

¹ Latest Census 1921. Europeans 1,520,000; Natives 4,700,000; Asiatics 167,000; Coloured 546,000. See Appendix IV.

The “Native” is the pure blooded Kaffir, natives of different tribes and origin. The “Coloured man” is a person of mixed blood. The Coloured Community, dating mainly from an early period, includes every shade of colour which is not quite white nor quite black; and has grown up by the intermixture in every possible combination of Europeans, Hottentots, Natives proper, together with Malays and other dark-skinned races introduced into South Africa in the days of slavery.

especially complex, and is greatly accentuated by a definite "colour bar" in certain parts of the Union, and its varying moral equivalent elsewhere. The black or coloured men are the hewers of wood and drawers of water, and the white man has, as Lord Bryce remarked, "lost the habit of performing manual toil and acquired the habit of despising it."

The altitude of the principal mining centre, Johannesburg and the Rand, with its effect on the nerves, may perhaps be also held responsible for some of the perennial explosions which occur in that area.¹

The Native Protectorates of Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland have their own problems, racial, social and economic. Northern Rhodesia, not in itself a white man's Country, has its own particular interests, ideas and ideals. Southern Rhodesia—a white man's country and a country which has a peculiar attraction of its own—has had a unique experience of Administration for over thirty years by a Chartered Company, with of late years a certain measure of popular representation; and has finally reached its goal of Responsible Government.

South Africa thus presents a unique combination of fundamental problems which have to be faced by its responsible Statesmen; and the solution of which is consciously or unconsciously tinged with racialism, and governed by the peculiar mental and moral atmosphere which is engendered when

¹ A prominent Labour Leader, after one of the usual Rand ferments, wrote to me "I often think how much more tranquil the country would have been if the gold mines had been found at an altitude of a thousand, instead of six thousand feet above sea level."

higher and lower civilization live side by side. "I doubt," said General Botha to me on one occasion, "whether it is sufficiently understood or appreciated by the public in Great Britain or in the other Dominions, that the Union stands on quite a different basis to other parts of the Empire. There are here three great and disturbing problems, factors which do not exist in any other Dominion—Natives and Whites, British and Boer, Dutch and Dutch."

Yet in the face of these fundamental and disturbing problems, the British and Dutch have together founded a great and prosperous Dominion, with almost infinite possibilities of development, and which excites in its inhabitants a passion of affection and devotion.

II

Even in the most hum-drum times, which so rarely occur in South Africa—the stormy petrel of the Dominions—the position of Governor General of the Union and High Commissioner for South Africa, one and the same person, cannot fail to be of great and abiding interest.

It may be well therefore to devote a Chapter to some account of the wide range of duties responsibilities and activities which fall upon the King's representative in both capacities.

It may be of interest also to indicate his relations as Governor General—interpreted no doubt differently by different holders of the Office, and varying with the circumstances of the time—with his Prime Minister and with the Union Cabinet; and his responsibilities as High Commissioner in connection with Rhodesia and the Native Protectorates under his control.

The Governor General represents the King, and

is the Constitutional link between the Imperial Government and the Dominion of which he is the Head. He corresponds with, and is responsible to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the one hand ; and, on the other, acts on the advice of the Dominion Government to which he is accredited. Unlike the proverbial Servant, he has no difficulty in being able to do justice to both his Masters. The one he keeps informed of all that is going on in the Union ; and to the other he gives his constitutional support.

The Governor General of a Dominion is a Constitutional Governor, and, speaking generally, is bound by the advice of his Ministers, who are themselves responsible to a Parliament freely elected by the people. His duties and responsibilities are somewhat nebulous and cannot be exactly defined, but in practice difficulties seldom or never arise.

In one or two matters he has definite powers and responsibility. In the case of Death Sentences in the Union he has the assistance of the Executive Council (of which he is Chairman) in deciding whether to confirm or to commute them, but the final responsibility for the decision is his alone.

In the event of the death or the resignation of the Prime Minister he is solely responsible for the selection of a successor. As a matter of practice however it is as a rule simple enough to decide on whom the mantle shall fall. The Governor General can dismiss a Ministry ; he can refuse a Dissolution asked for by his Prime Minister, while he can himself dissolve Parliament against the wishes of his Ministers. But, unless he were absolutely confident that public opinion would fully uphold him in regard to any one of these actions, it would be folly and

worse on his part to act against the advice of his Prime Minister.

The High Commissioner, on the other hand, is in all respects under the direct control of the Imperial Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He is responsible for, and (subject of course to the Secretary of State) has full Legislative and Executive authority over the three Native Protectorates of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. These Territories are locally administered by a Resident Commissioner who is directly responsible to the High Commissioner.

Basutoland and Bechuanaland are purely Native territories ; and, apart from Officials, no Europeans can live or settle there without the leave and licence of the High Commissioner. Swaziland is in a somewhat different position. Thanks to the greed and gullibility of the late Paramount Chief Umbandine in the Eighties, native rights in land, in minerals and in other ways were recklessly granted away to concession hunters. Some hundreds of whites, farmers and others are already living in Swaziland ; while the land has now been definitely delimited and allocated, between the whites and the natives.

The High Commissioner has also in various ways direct control over the affairs of Northern Rhodesia. Before the grant of Responsible Government to Southern Rhodesia, and while Chartered Company Rule continued (combined of later years with a Legislative Assembly possessing considerable powers) the High Commissioner had certain responsibilities and functions in the nature of a general control, and special responsibilities in regard to the Natives ; but his position was a somewhat delicate one.

Since October 1923, Southern Rhodesia has enjoyed Responsible Government ; but the High Commissioner still retains substantially the same powers in reference to the natives that he possessed under the old Regime.

Before the South African War the High Commissioner (whose office was combined with that of Governor of the Cape Colony) was High Commissioner of the two British Colonies, the Cape Colony and Natal, and was also the intermediary between the British Government and the Governments of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State in connection with any question that arose between them—no sinecure as regards the South African Republic.

After the South African War and before Responsible Government came into being, the Governor of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony held the High Commissionership. The position was no easy one, and the conflicting, divergent or antagonistic interests and views of the four Colonies, their divided counsels, their lack of co-ordination or concerted action, constantly necessitated his good offices.

But the Union of the four Colonies brought about a notable change in the position and responsibilities of the High Commissioner. Though the Office of High Commissioner for South Africa continued to be held with that of the Governor General of the Union, the High Commissioner ceased to be responsible for any matter affecting the Union. The main question with which the Governor General and the High Commissioner are now mutually concerned is that of the welfare of the natives, in which the High Commissioner is interested as affecting

the Protectorates, and the Governor General-in-Council as affecting the Union.

The authority exercised by the Governor General and High Commissioner is thus constitutional as regards the Union, autocratic as regards the three Native Protectorates of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland, and betwixt and between as regards Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

PART II

ACTIVITIES

SOUTH AFRICA is a Country of immense distances and striking contrasts of altitude, climate and scenery, while Nature itself is full of variety and contradictions.

Few people in England realise I think the size of the territory which goes under the name of South Africa. The combined area under the Governor General and the High Commissioner stretches south to north from the Cape to the Belgian Congo ; west to east from the Atlantic south of Portuguese Angola, to Portuguese East Africa and Nyassaland. The Union, Rhodesia, the Protectorates and the South West Territory between them cover an area double that of France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Great Britain combined.

It is also seldom realised, I imagine, how very minute is the white population which occupies this vast tract of country. The European population of the Union numbers, even now, only just over one and a half millions, little more than the population of some of the large towns in Great Britain. In Natal itself, the Europeans do not number more than some hundred thousand, less than the residents in many single constituencies in England. Apart from the Union the number of whites in South Africa is a mere handful.

The two official Capitals of the Union, Cape Town, the Parliamentary, and Pretoria, the Administrative Centre, are a thousand miles apart ; and it takes the best part of two days to get from one to the other. Cape Town to Durban in Natal, occupies two and a half days ; to reach Salisbury the capital of Southern Rhodesia, or Livingstone the capital of Northern Rhodesia, from Cape Town is a four days' journey.¹

The mere travelling involved therefore consumes a vast amount of time. On the average we actually spent well over a month of days and nights in each year in our special train—in one year we slept fifty-two nights in the train.

I remember on one occasion at Cape Town we had five guests to luncheon, coming quite accidentally on the same day. There were two Portuguese Officers from Lourenço Marques, a friend and his wife from Louis Trichardt in the Northern Transvaal, and a lady-farmer from Kafue in Northern Rhodesia. On comparing notes we found that between them they had come some eight thousand miles.

Before Union there were four separate Capitals ; Cape Town, Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg. But in the Cape Province Port Elizabeth and East London are large ports, and Kimberley is the diamond centre. In the Transvaal there is not only Pretoria but Johannesburg, the most populous, enterprising and richest town in the Union. In Natal, Durban the port overshadows

¹ A friend who had just landed at Cape Town came to see me on the Saturday, and said that he was going to run up to Grahams-town to visit a friend and would come and see me again on the Monday. To Grahamstown and back is practically a four days' journey.

Maritzburg both in population and wealth. In the Free State, besides Bloemfontein, there is Kroonstad in the north and Harrismith, at one time itself a capital, in the east.

The Governor General must divide his attentions between all these towns, and pay them visits annually or from time to time. There are besides these scores of other towns, of more or less importance and repute, and hundreds of little dorps dotted about the Country where the King's Representative will be warmly welcomed, or where it is advisable that he should go, and thus get into touch with all sorts and conditions in the Union.

Last, but not least, the two Rhodesias require the attention of their High Commissioner. Salisbury is the capital of Southern Rhodesia, but Bulawayo has an equal claim to attention; while Victoria, Gwelo and Umtali at least cannot be left out in the cold. A visit to Livingstone, the capital of Northern Rhodesia involves a visit to Broken Hill and to the Kafue, and of course to "The Falls."¹

Friendly relations with our Portuguese and with our Belgian neighbours are usefully cultivated by visits to Delagoa Bay in Portuguese East Africa, and to Elizabethville in the Belgian Congo.

It is, moreover, of the utmost importance that the Governor General should visit the Native Territories in the Union—the Transkei, Zululand, the Zoutspanberg (in northern Transvaal) and other parts where the natives dwell. He must make an

¹ The Native name of the Victoria Falls is Mose ao tunya ("the Smoke that Sounds"), and perhaps a regret may be expressed that Livingstone did not retain the native name when he discovered the Falls in November 1855.

I have seen the Falls six times and should never tire of them.

opportunity of meeting also, from time to time, the natives who are congregated on the Rand and in Johannesburg, in Pretoria, Durban and other large towns.

Then, as High Commissioner, it is manifestly his duty to visit the Native Protectorates and their capitals, Basutoland and Maseru, Swaziland and Mbabane, and in Bechuanaland, Serowe, the town of the Paramount Chief.¹

These visits to the Native Territories or districts and the consequent Indaba—meeting for discussion—or Pitso—native Assembly—are wonderfully picturesque, interesting and moving. The meetings are eagerly sought by the Chiefs, and are attended by their followers who come in their thousands often from long distances to meet the Great White Chief. The Chiefs are as a rule disappointingly dressed in neat European costume, usually with riding breeches and boots; but the “raw” natives in their coloured blankets add an effective touch of colour. Then when, as occasionally happens, a War Dance is given, both Chief and warriors come in their ‘war paint,’ and their lithe copper-coloured well groomed muscular bodies, bedecked with skins, feathers, tails and ornaments, give a vivid appearance of strength and vitality.

In Basutoland, where thousands of the Basuto ride in on their ponies to meet the High Commissioner, the gathering of the clans is singularly picturesque.

The assembled natives listen in rapt attention

¹ Paramount Chief Khama, a friend of mine for whom I had a great regard, died in 1923, well over ninety years of age. He has been succeeded by his son, Sekgoma. Khama was a great, enlightened and peace-loving Chief.

to the speech and to the encouragement or advice given to them. A reference to Queen Victoria is greatly appreciated, and a deep sighing moan expresses the devotion and reverence in which her name is still held by the natives in South Africa. General Botha's name was always received with warm respect, the natives of the Union realising full well the interest he took in their welfare.

The Chiefs, and Indunas speak with fluency and force, and using apt illustration, metaphor and appropriate gesture, express their loyalty to the King and their gratification at seeing his Representative—while they are by no means backward in detailing their grievances.

The personal contact of the Governor General or High Commissioner with the Chiefs, Indunas and natives themselves, is undoubtedly of great value. It enlarges their mental horizon, and brings home to them the fact that, in the one case the Imperial Government, and in the other the Union Government are taking a real interest in their welfare.

It will thus be seen that in this widespread territory, apart from other duties, ceremonies and activities, the life of the Governor General and High Commissioner—not to speak of 'Her Excellency'—is no lotus life of indolence and ease.

They may perhaps once a year snatch a short, though too often disturbed holiday, and camp on the banks of the Zambesi, of the Chobe or of the Limpopo, and shoot big game, or better still, catch (or lose) the tiger fish—the most formidably equipped and the most sporting of his kind.

PART III

PERSONAL

I

MY own arrival as Governor General and High Commissioner coincided with the outbreak of War, and the majority at least of those in the Union were in a mood to give an especially warm and friendly welcome to the King's Representative.

I was, moreover, personally fortunate in that, before I went to South Africa, I had had an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of South African affairs. Some twenty years previously, in 1892-5, I was Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office. My Chief was Lord Ripon, one of those ideal Chiefs who delegate real responsibility to their Under-Secretary, and give him their full confidence.

It so happened that, apart from other things, I was especially responsible for the Department dealing with South African affairs; and, during the three years that I was at the Colonial Office, many questions of moment arose affecting South Africa, difficult, delicate or even dangerous, especially in connection with the South African Republic and with Rhodesia. The same opportunity brought me into contact during that period, either personally or by correspondence, with the leading men who were making South African history. Though some

of these had passed away, I found many old friends on my arrival in South Africa.

In another respect also I was perhaps fortunate. The fact that I was a member of the Cabinet which had, at an early stage in its career, conferred Responsible Government on the Transvaal and on the Orange River Colony, stood me in good stead, and constituted—even in the most disaffected districts—a ready and favourable introduction to all sections of those of Dutch extraction; while it was I am glad to believe no detriment to cordial relations with the British section.

I would like to take this opportunity of adding that, wherever I went—and I pretty well covered the area of the Union—whether it were to the largest town or the smallest dorp, and whatever the political view of those with whom I came into contact, I invariably received from Boer and Briton alike, the utmost courtesy and consideration, of which I retain a vivid recollection and a warm feeling of gratitude.

II

As Governor General I had nothing of course to do with the party politics of the Dominion; nor, for the time being with Home politics. My duty was to give such support and advice as lay in my power when I was consulted officially or unofficially by the Government of the day, not because they were composed of this or that Party or Persons, but because they were for the time being “my Ministers,” the Government of a Self-governing Dominion, supported by a Parliament popularly elected.

The Governor General, as such, is responsible neither for administration nor constructive work.

But he has one advantage that inasmuch as he is divorced from local politics, he can be impartially in touch with all sorts and conditions of men and every variety and aspect of national and social life. Anyone who desires can have access to him, can confide in him, and can discuss questions with him frankly and freely. In his position he is above local or personal jealousy, and is able to give a lead and take part in non-political matters that interest and concern the citizens—and South Africans meet you more than half way.

The Governor General has to deliver speeches on all sorts of occasions, and has to make many bricks with very little straw. Many subjects have to be avoided altogether, others can only be introduced with care and discretion. Indeed I am not sure whether his speeches should not be classed as a "dangerous trade" and scheduled accordingly, for an unexpected spark may lead to an explosion, uncomfortable to all parties—and especially to the Governor General.

I considered it my duty on occasion to point out in public speech the Constitutional position of the Union as part of the Empire, and emphatically to disclaim any intention or desire on the part of the Imperial Government or of the British Parliament and People to interfere in the slightest degree with the full and unfettered liberty of Self-Government which had been conferred upon the Dominion.

Then I did my best always to throw my weight, as far as I constitutionally could, on the side of tolerance and to soften racial feelings. Wherever I travelled in the various parts of the Union, and especially at the innumerable meetings I had with farmers and others in the country districts, I always preached

from these texts, and I should like to think that my sermons were not entirely thrown away. It is related of the late Duke of Cambridge, who was of the old school, that after listening attentively to a forcible sermon against swearing, he remarked to his A.D.C. as he went out, "A damned good sermon, by God!"

The Governor General should strive to acquire two useful accomplishments—how to ride on the snaffle and how to skate over thin ice.

III

I was sworn in at Capetown as Governor General on September 8th 1914, and it was understood that my term of Office should be for five years; thus, with allowance for accumulated leave, terminating in June 1919.

Early in 1919 I was sounded as to whether I would be willing to remain as Governor General for a few years longer in order to see the Country into quiet waters. Looking at the history of South Africa, it seemed to me that you might as well ask the fish to remain in the frying-pan until the fire went out, as to ask a Governor General to stay on until all was peace and quiet. In any case I was in principle opposed to a 'second term,' and precedents generally were not encouraging. I had moreover been continuously in Office, first in England and then in South Africa since December 1905, and I did not think it would be advisable to undertake a prolonged additional period.

It was then suggested, with the approval and I believe at the instance of General Botha, that I should prolong my term for another year to May 1920. As the outlook at that time was somewhat

obscure, I gladly assented to this proposal, for the last thing I desired to do was to leave the ship while the storm was still high. The General Election of March 1920, after Botha's death, left the new Prime Minister and his Government to face the Parliamentary Session with a majority of one or two votes only. Under the circumstances, as again it seemed an unsuitable moment to lay down my Office, I agreed, at the request of the Union and Imperial Governments, to stay on until after the end of the Session. I finally left in September 1920, having completed just six years as Governor General and High Commissioner.

The six years were replete with incidents and novel experiences; and the generosity, sympathy and friendliness of all those in South Africa made the period one of intense interest and of great enjoyment.

Whatever may have been the general estimate of the Governor General of 1914 to 1920, he did at least receive one comprehensive endorsement. An unknown correspondent wrote to assure me that "I was the only Gentleman, except the Almighty, in whom he had any confidence." My natural satisfaction was somewhat damped when my Secretary drew my attention to the fact that the address was that of a Mental Hospital.¹

IV

During the years that I was Governor General the relations between the Imperial Government and

¹ One other recognition I may quote. The Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Football Club of a small town wrote to say that "his Committee heartily recognised what I had done since I had been Governor General, and the members of the Club had unanimously elected me as *one of the Vice-Presidents.*"

the Union Government were entirely frank and friendly. The period was one of great anxiety and stress, and an infinity of delicate and complex questions arose which might easily have given rise to some misunderstanding or friction. But, throughout, no shade or shadow of difference arose between the two, a great testimony surely to the elasticity of the constitutional relations between the Imperial Government and the Dominion.

General Botha and his Government were not slow to express their warm appreciation of the prompt, considerate and helpful way in which South African matters were handled by the Imperial Government and that the requests made by the Union Government to the Imperial Government were, as far as was humanly possible met, and not infrequently anticipated. "I am highly gratified," said General Botha to me on one occasion, "the Imperial Government always go one better than they say." The feeling was reciprocated, and the Colonial Office often expressed to me their view that Botha was so reasonable and understanding that it was always a pleasure to meet his wishes.

Of the Union I would say, if I may do so without presumption, that the standard both of public and political life is high, and that the Civil Service is both efficient and above reproach.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to add that during the whole of this period of constant intercourse between Ministers, Permanent Officials as well as others in unofficial positions, and myself and while matters of great secrecy were repeatedly discussed or circulated, my confidence was absolutely respected and nothing was ever divulged except with my assent.

One final expression of gratitude I would desire to express. I was extremely fortunate during my six years of office in South Africa to have had as my Chief, and Secretary of State for the Colonies, first Mr. Harcourt (the late Lord Harcourt), then Mr. Bonar Law, followed by Mr. Walter Long (Lord Long) and finally Lord Milner. All four were personal friends, and men with whom I had had political or other relations for many years.

Throughout they each and all gave me their unqualified confidence and support, encouragement and sympathy. On every occasion they, the Permanent Secretary and the Officials, met promptly and ungrudgingly, the views and requests of the Governor General, of the High Commissioner, and of the Union Government—often no easy matter. These four Statesmen represented among them somewhat different political leanings, but their policy was in every respect the same; for, happily, questions affecting the Dominions have of late years been removed from the arena of party controversy and strife.¹

Certainly South Africa, as a whole, during the War and after, was no bed of roses; the thorns—a marked feature in South Africa—were at least as apparent and plentiful as the petals.

When some crisis had been safely passed, there

¹ "Sir George Grey, when Governor of the Cape, was once re-proved for 'direct disobedience' to the orders of the Colonial Office. The rebuke was deserved, but his answer was forcible. 'During the five years which have elapsed since I was appointed to my present office (he wrote), there have been at least seven Secretaries-of-State for the Colonial Department, each of whom held different views upon some important points of policy connected with the Country.'"—Wyatt Tilby, *The English People Overseas*, vol. vi.

came upon one not so much a feeling of relief, as of curiosity as to where the country would break out next. The old Irish jingle sums up the situation.

“ When the glass goes down, *how very*
Hard it rains in Cork and Kerry,
When the glass goes up, oh ! lawk,
HOW it rains in Kerry and Cork ! ”

But, after all, and though it adds to the anxiety, it also adds immensely to the interest that things should happen—and South Africa is a great place for happenings.

I laid down my Office with an ever-growing conviction that South Africa was a country of surprises, of ups-and-downs, of glorious sunshine and of sudden storms, of drought and of deluge, of optimism and pessimism ; but, above all, a country which has a unique attraction and fascination of its own.

CHAPTER IX

MY RELATIONS WITH BOTHA

I

GENERAL BOTHA was Prime Minister during the first five years that I was Governor General of the Union, and General Smuts during the last year.

I have in this book, as far as I could, avoided any detailed reference to, or comment on those who are living—though I appreciate that in this respect I may be somewhat old-fashioned—and I will only permit myself therefore to say as regards General Smuts, that I consider myself singularly fortunate in having had such close, frank and intimate relations with him, extending over some years, first when he was Minister of Defence, then when Acting Prime Minister (while General Botha was in German South West), and finally as Prime Minister himself.

My personal relations with the Cabinet Ministers (all Union Ministers are in the Cabinet) were by no means confined to the Prime Minister and to General Smuts. General Botha encouraged me to see his Colleagues, and to discuss with them questions of moment or Departmental matters in which I was interested, or on which they desired to consult me; and not infrequently at his special request I had interviews and talks with them on particular subjects.

During the period of the Prime Minister's absence

from the Union to attend the Peace Conference (from November 1918 to July 1919) General Smuts being also in Europe Mr. F. S. Malan¹ was Acting Prime Minister, and we naturally had constant and intimate communication, which I greatly valued.

My personal relations with the other Ministers,² with the Heads of Departments and various Officials could not have been of a more friendly character, and were to me of the utmost value. I shall be ever grateful to them one and all.

The Chief Justice³ (who is ex-officio Acting Governor General in the absence of the Governor General) was a ready help in time of trouble; whilst his ripe experience and his well balanced judgment was always freely placed at my disposal.

General Botha from the very first not only met my wish, but warmly encouraged me to get into touch and to keep in touch with the representative men of the Union, both Dutch and English, and to discuss matters freely with them.

Of Sir Thomas Smartt the Leader of the Unionist Party, I saw a great deal; Colonel Creswell, the Leader of the Labour Party, was a personal friend of many years' standing. With these two, and with some of their lieutenants, I had free communication. General Hertzog, the Leader of the Nationalist Party, and I were always on most friendly terms; and I received every courtesy from his followers, though naturally during the latter part of my time in South Africa, the relations between us were of a somewhat delicate nature.

¹ The Rt. Hon. F. S. Malan, Minister of Mines and Industries.

² See Appendix II. for names of the Ministers in Botha's Cabinet.

³ The Rt. Hon. Sir James Rose-Innes, K.C.M.G.

Mr. John X. Merriman, the last Cape Prime Minister, an outstanding and striking personality, the G.O.M. of South Africa, was a greatly valued friend—in spite of his jeremiads. With President Steyn I had more than one interesting talk. Besides these, there were many others inside and outside politics with whom I had constant relations.

It was said of a somewhat fussy and interfering Governor of a Self-governing Colony (not in South Africa) that when his term of Office was coming to a close, it was intimated privately to the Colonial Office, as the desire of the Colony, that his successor should be one “who would allow us to go to the Devil in our own way”—I trust I did not baulk the Union in this respect.

II

To my relations with General Botha as Prime Minister and as friend, I look back with unalloyed pleasure and satisfaction. It was extraordinarily interesting to have to do with such a man at such a time.

I already knew Louis Botha fairly well before I went out to South Africa ; and, when President of the Board of Trade, had been personally consulted by him in regard to certain shipping and industrial matters in which his Government were interested. We had seen something of him and of Mrs. Botha on the various occasions when he was in England, and Mrs. Botha had stayed with us in Sussex in 1911 when the General was away in Germany taking the waters.

He and I were, therefore, from the very beginning on somewhat intimate terms, which rapidly grew



GENERAL BOTHA AND THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AT RUSTHOF, DECEMBER 1917.

more and more intimate as time went on. We mutually, I am certain, trusted each other implicitly and completely, and we were therefore able to talk over any and every question that arose with the utmost frankness, sincerity and goodwill. "I am sure," wrote Mrs. Botha to me after the General's death, "you miss Louis very much—he was never so pleased as when you sent for him to discuss the different questions of State. He was so proud of your trust and faith in him and your affection for him, which he also warmly reciprocated."

The six years—five of them with General Botha as Prime Minister—during which I was in South Africa from August 1914 to September 1920, were years of special strain and stress, of great anxiety and trouble, bristling with difficulties and studded with perplexing problems great and small. Naturally the relations of the Imperial Government with the Union Government during the War and immediately afterwards, were far more close and direct than they would have been under ordinary circumstances. I was therefore entitled to, and was expected to have a voice and influence on all questions affecting Imperial relationship and mutual co-operation, and on the many questions which directly or indirectly arose out of them.

The discussions or communications between the Governor General and his Prime Minister were, however, for the most part informal and unofficial. Indeed, during my years of Office, though I had scores, indeed hundreds of interviews with General Botha or his Colleagues, I do not remember more than half a dozen occasions on which he or they came to see me officially as Governor General.

The advice given to me in October 1914 that I

should proclaim Martial Law at the time of Maritz's treachery, was one such occasion. Another was the decision of the Cabinet conveyed to me by the Prime Minister and General Smuts on October 25th 1914, that action could no longer be delayed, and that they must take immediate active military steps to suppress the Rebellion. Then at the outbreak of the Rebellion, when the safety of Pretoria was seriously menaced and the railway communications with the South were threatened, the Prime Minister came officially to see me on behalf of the Cabinet to advise that I should leave Pretoria and go down to Capetown with the bulk of the Cabinet.

The proposals of Governor Seitz to General Botha after the fall of Windhuk ; and, again, the terms of Peace proposed by General Botha to Col. Franke in July 1915, were considered officially by the Cabinet in consultation with myself.

Occasionally, though very seldom, some question was raised at the Executive Council. Usually however the discussions which then took place were informal. There were doubtless other occasions when minor questions were put before me officially, and of course Ministers' Minutes came officially before me in ordinary course.

When we were at Cape Town during the Parliamentary Session, these conversations would usually take place in my room at Government House, and when we were at Pretoria in my room at the Union Buildings. In my discussions with Botha, with Ministers and with others, I never made any mental reservations but I put all my cards on the table (to use a singularly inept metaphor), and so I felt sure did they all.

III

Botha and I always, of course, talked in English. His unfamiliarity with the English language and with its idioms gave a fresh and graphic turn to common expressions. For instance he used to say "We are not yet out of the bush," an apt metaphor in South Africa. At a time of a serious crisis, when difficulties were clearing up, he said of his opponents that he thought he "could knock 'em in the veld," which has a familiar ring.

In conversation and in our discussions he liked me to speak slowly—rapidity of utterance is one of my besetting sins. He was always most anxious that I should follow him correctly; and he would constantly pause after he had finished a sentence or two to interject, "You follow me Sir?" His meaning, however, was always perfectly clear and his explanation or argument easy to follow.

The following extract from a private and personal letter to Mr. Harcourt, when Secretary of State, describes our relations the one with the other:

"Botha is altogether delightful to deal with. He is entirely open and simple (in the best sense of the word) and wears his heart on his sleeve.

"When discussing things with him, I can appreciate at once his view; and I can see, as we go along to what extent and in what direction my arguments and persuasion are influencing his mind.

"He is also full of tact and common sense in the way he discusses and handles affairs; and is always open to argument."

Indeed I think we were both always open to argument, and, as Botha in one of his letters to me said "we nearly always agree." I hardly remember

a case in which, after discussion, and give and take, we did not come to an agreement both in opinion and action ; and on only one important question, and that in very early days, do I remember that we had a serious difference of opinion, and this in the end was happily adjusted.

When the German South West Campaign, and later the German East Campaign were being considered, a good deal of our time was occupied in discussing the best plan of campaign. On one occasion I remember, when the General and the Minister for Defence were discussing with me the proposed operations of the two Southern Forces against German South West, and we were poring over a large map, that I expressed some surprise at the latter's intimate familiarity with the country there-a-bout. " Oh," said Smuts with a laugh, " I spent the better part of a year in that district of the Cape trying to get the Cape Dutch to rise."

After we had finished our strategic discussion General Botha, would, not infrequently, turn to another part of the map and would explain to me the operations of Boer and British during the War ; the battles round Ladysmith, the advance of Lord Roberts, the march of French, the Boer attacks and surprises. He would make clear also from the map how, as the war went on, Kitchener's barbed-wire policy, combined with the attrition of the Boer forces, gradually restricted the area of operations and eventually brought the power of effective resistance to an end.

III

Apart from our discussions on questions of policy and other matters of a similar nature, Botha used to like to come and discuss with me his doubts

and his difficulties, his little as well as his big sorrows.

Troubles often lose some of their acuteness and burden when talked over exhaustively and sympathetically in the confidence of intimate friendship. The mere fact that he was able to let off steam, which he could not always do so freely with his Colleagues or others, was a relief to him. Sometimes, also I was able I think to make him better understand the British point of view, often somewhat obscure to him.

These talks were especially frequent when we were all at Cape Town together for the Parliamentary Session, when he was living at Groote Schuur and I, within a stone's throw, at Westbrooke. "Nearly every evening," as my wife wrote in a letter home somewhat savouring of *lèse majesté*, "after the House rises, General Botha walks slowly here looking very enormous and sits on a chair talking to Sydney, telling him all his troubles. He pours out everything just like a child. Whenever I burst in upon them I always think they look like a sardine and an elephant together. General Botha and Sydney doat upon each other, and why their conversation ever comes to an end I cannot imagine."

We would sit, in two armchairs side by side on the stoep, I smoking and he enjoying the smell of the cigar. Botha used to smoke in his younger days, but had given up the habit for some years as it affected his throat—his delicate throat was a contributory cause of his death later. He told me that, though he had at first found it a great deprivation to give up smoking he never hankered after it now.

Sometimes he would be in very good spirits and

would laugh and joke over the 'one damned thing after another' that had arisen, declare that all was going well and the outlook bright, or express his confident belief that, though the position appeared critical, he would make the rough way smooth and pull through all right.

He had, of course, his ups and downs, and on other occasions when things were going wrong he would be in sober mood, or disturbed, overwrought and depressed. "I am full of trouble," he would begin "and want your sympathy." On one occasion when the clouds looked very black, he lamented that he had been unable to sleep and had a feeling of great oppression—"the world, is getting too narrow for me." On another occasion when affairs had got into a nasty tangle I said "What do you suggest?" He said, "I have nothing to suggest, but I am very much disturbed and I wanted to let you know the position and discuss it with you. I usually can suggest something, but I cannot here." But he was (as I have already said) by nature an optimist, and, unless his health were affecting his strength and spirits, he would, after discussion, cheer up, and his initial pessimism would again give way to optimism—a blue patch of sky would peep out, a hopeful line of action would suggest itself.

More than once when political or Parliamentary crises arose (with which I deal elsewhere) he was depressed, perhaps over-depressed, and resignation appeared to him the easy, indeed the only way out of accumulating difficulties and disappointments. It seemed especially attractive and permissible when he was suffering from illhealth, or from a fit of pessimism; or when he was hampered in carrying out what he believed to be the right

course, or thought that his retention of Office was jeopardising the position and future of his Party. "I shall be glad to be out of it," he would say, "and glad to go back to my farm."

On these occasions I would do my best to cheer him up, and use my influence to dissuade him from carrying out his half-formed intention. I would quote to him the saying that the two red letter days in a politician's career were the day on which he took Office and the day on which he left Office; and pointed out that he wasn't the only Prime Minister just then who would like to be out of Office and free of responsibility if he could decently retire.

Then the mood would usually change and he would declare that "though I should like to go out I made up my mind from the beginning of the War that I could not do so in the middle of the stream. It would be a cowardly thing to do." He would end by volunteering an assurance that at least he would not "ride for a fall."

On such occasions, and on others when the complicated machinery of Government began to creak ominously, he would invoke my good offices—what he called my 'cruse of oil'—to help to tide over some difference or difficulty that had arisen. On one such occasion in a letter to the Secretary of State (Mr. Walter Long) I wrote :

"Botha came down to Westbrooke from Groote Schuur this evening (on Sunday, our usual weekly discussion, apart from other opportunities) to talk it all over. As he went away he thanked me much for our talk, and said 'I always go away happier after these talks, especially when things are going wrong.'

"My object on these occasions of crisis—and

they are not rare—is to exercise my influence and persuasion against {resignation; and especially against any hasty or premature step along the slippery path leading to the precipice.”

While however he was not averse to talking of resignation himself, he was not over tolerant when others did the same. On one occasion when there had been a Cabinet crisis he said to me “ I object strongly to Ministers going about with resignations in their pockets and using them as a means of enforcing their views.” He illustrated this view by telling me that President Kruger was very fond, when he did not get his own way with his Volksraad, of threatening to resign. “ On one occasion the President had proffered his usual resignation, which he never intended to be accepted, and thereupon I promptly got up and moved that the resignation should be accepted. A debate ensued, after which the President was very chary of again threatening to resign.” I reminded Botha of a similar proceeding on the part of President Thiers, and that in the end to his disgust his resignation was accepted, and Marshal McMahon was elected in his stead.

The General used to relate to me his experiences as a Member of the Volksraad and his recollections of President Kruger. Kruger he said was a great personality though not a good speaker nor debater, he knew his own mind and was very determined to get his own way. Joubert, his progressive rival, and with whose views Botha sympathised, was a much better speaker, but he had a difficulty in making up his mind, and could not and would not give a decided lead either in counsel or in speech, and so was nearly always worsted by the President. “ In the first speech (Botha told me once) that

Kruger made on any question before the Volksraad he would take a strong line and emphatically express his opinion as to what he wanted the Volksraad to do, and tried to get his way by storming and 'frightfulness.' If he found that opinion was going against him, he would in his second speech try to persuade them and take up a conciliatory attitude. If, even after that he could not get what he wanted, he would then quote the Bible, solemnly declaring that the quotations were all on his side, and usually got his way."

On another occasion Botha said, "President Kruger was allowed to speak as often as he liked. Of this privilege he took full advantage, and nearly always wound up the debate as well. This in time became intolerable, and a Bill was introduced to limit the President to one speech in each debate. Kruger fought this proposal to the last stage. He was defeated, and then said—'Very well, gentlemen, I won't oppose the Bill any further and you can pass it. But I shall break it as soon as it is passed and you can then punish me'—and the Bill was dropped."

Botha was very fond of talking about his Farm, and on the occasion of a visit for a few days which we paid to the General and Mrs. Botha at Rusthof in December 1917, he was anxious and persistent that I should see and appreciate everything connected with the farm. Apart from his flocks and herds, he was especially proud of his trees. He used to tell me with a chuckle that every Christmas the family party in the house were expected to plant so many thousand young trees. On one occasion a prolonged drought played havoc with his planta-

tion, and the loss of his dearly beloved trees was a constant subject of conversation and lamentation, and distracted his mind for the moment from the anxieties of the Union.

I find the following note in reference to this visit. "Botha has a very fine farm. A railway runs through the middle of it, and he has a station not far from the centre, so he is well placed. There are four or five Dutch managers on his farm. They were asked up to meet me on the Sunday and were very shy. One of them said to Mrs. Botha about half way through the afternoon—'Did you notice that I did not say good morning to you when I came in? I was so nervous coming to see the Governor General that I forgot it, and must do it now.'

"Botha believes in well-bred sheep and cattle, the latter mainly Frieslands. He grows a great deal of mealies half of which, unfortunately, this year have been drowned out. At the back of the house is a large enclosure called a 'camp' in which he keeps some wildebeeste, springbok and blesbok. We drove up in a motor to see them, and got fairly near some of them. The wildebeeste are very savage and it is not safe for anyone ever to walk or ride across the camp and it is strictly forbidden. They still shy at the motor and have not as yet 'stormed' it. Some little time ago two 'boys' who had come from another part of the country out of bravado went into the camp and were immediately attacked by the wildebeeste. One of them was killed and the other was seriously injured, to Botha's great distress.

"Three neighbouring farmers, intelligent men and progressive farmers, as indeed are most about here,

one English and two Dutch, came over on Sunday afternoon to see me. Another Dutch farmer, an old man who is partially paralysed and lives some miles off, was very anxious to come and pay his respects to me and to express his sympathy, in the recent loss of my son ; and, in spite of his physical weakness, he came over on the Monday. He does not speak nor understand English. He made me a little sympathetic discourse, and then in the the old Dutch style prayed over us, very sincerely and touchingly. I greatly appreciated his visit and his sympathy."

General Botha was always keen and encouraging about my visits to the various towns and districts of the Union, and was especially interested in my tours to the country districts, and anxious to hear an account of my experiences on my return. These visits to the farming districts, sometimes the back-of-beyond, often ' rebel ' districts, were truly South African and racy of the soil, picturesque and full of local colour. They gave me an invaluable opportunity of getting into touch with the farmers and others ; and I look back upon them with very real pleasure.

Before starting on one of his own speaking tours the General used often to come and see me. He was nearly always in a somewhat depressed state of mind in consequence of the usual reports which had come from the local politicians, who temperamentally and naturally had made the worst of the local political position in order to induce the ' General ' to come and re-inspire them. But as soon as he " had met his people and got them round," his spirits soon revived, and when he returned

and came to see me again he was always in good heart.

Though broad-minded and charitable, Botha, in the intimacy of private talk which he knew would go no further, did not disguise his feelings nor refrain from expressing himself very freely about men and things. He was rather fond sometimes of tarring with a generous brush those who did not happen to agree with him, and he had a trenchant word for those who had annoyed him.

But, while he might be, as he said 'opgefed' with such as these, he never failed of a sympathetic word for those, whether foe or friend, whose character or doings he admired. Of de la Rey he spoke with a fervour which one cannot reproduce, of his affection for him, and of his admiration for him as a man and a soldier—"He was the finest soldier I have ever met, and the bravest man, he would never give in." To Christian de Wet he always referred in terms of affection mingled with sorrow.

Botha was one of those who "knew the cost and did not count it." It may be said of him as it was said of the younger Pitt—a very different man in other respects—that after an interview with him he 'always left you a better man.'

CHAPTER X

THE S.A.P. AND THE UNIONIST PARTY

I

DURING the period with which this Book is concerned there were four separate political Parties in the Union.

The South African Party was led by General Botha, the Unionist Party by Sir Thomas Smartt, the Nationalist Party by General Hertzog, and the Labour Party by Colonel Creswell.

The South African Party (commonly spoken of as the S.A.P.) was the lineal descendant of the "Bond"; the Party which was to a large extent created by Hofmeyr, who was animated by a desire to bring about unity and co-operation between the two White Races. The S.A.P. (up to 1913 the 'Africander Nationalist Party') like the Bond itself, while mainly of Dutch descent, included in its ranks a considerable number of members of British ancestry.¹

The Unionist Party, formerly 'The Progressive Party' who adopted the name of 'Unionists' in 1910 as an expression of their fundamental adherence to the Act of Union, at one time included in the main the British section. But of late years the

¹ Such as Merriman, Watt, Burton Leuchars, Orr, Hull, and many others; and for the most part, the Members from Natal, an essentially British part of South Africa, were supporters of Botha.

formation and rapid growth of the Labour Party had detached from them a large number of those of British descent.

The Nationalist Party, which evolved from the split in the S.A.P. in 1912-13, consisted wholly of those of Dutch descent.

In Great Britain, as a rule, the Cabinet decides on its action and policy and expects its Party to follow its lead. In South Africa, though the Cabinet, or the respective Leaders of the different Parties may give a lead, they have more or less to assure themselves beforehand that their Party will follow them. The so-called "Caucus" (i.e. the respective members of the Legislative Assembly and of the Senate) plays therefore a prominent and important part in the politics of South Africa.

This was especially the case in connection with the South African Party. It was the invariable custom after the House had met and before the work of the Session began, for the Prime Minister, and his Cabinet colleagues, to meet their Caucus in order to explain their proposals, to express their views, if necessary to persuade their followers to agree to the action they proposed to take. The Caucus was moreover always in being during the Session.

The caucus system as affecting the Government has one distinct advantage, namely that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, having hammered out the critical question beforehand with their followers, know how they stand and to what extent they can rely on the full, or at all events the acquiescing support of their followers in the policy which they propose to carry out. On the other hand, the Government may be seriously hampered in its

freedom of action by the necessity of consulting the Caucus and of obtaining its agreement. We have already seen that Botha and his colleagues had, on occasion, no easy task to persuade the Caucus to their way of thinking ; and, indeed, once or twice during the War and afterwards, the Cabinet had to modify or actually to withdraw its proposals in consequence of the pronounced objection taken to them at the meetings.

II

General Botha became Prime Minister of the Union in June 1910 when the Act of Union came into force ; but the first General Election for the first Union Parliament did not take place until the following October. At the election the S.A.P.—still one and indivisible—obtained a substantial majority over all the other parties in the House, while the majority of the 'Independents,' chiefly hailing from Natal, could be relied on to support General Botha. He had, therefore as Prime Minister a clear majority of some twenty or so out of a House numbering a hundred and twenty-one Members.¹

In 1912-13 came the rift in the lute, the differences between Botha and Hertzog, followed by the secession from the Government Party of ten or a dozen M.L.A.s² mostly from the Orange Free State. Nevertheless, during the remainder of the Parliament Botha could count on a working majority of thirteen or fourteen.

The first Union Parliament completed its five years of statutory existence, and was dissolved in

¹ See Appendix III for these Parliamentary figures and others quoted later.

² I.e., Member of the Legislative Assembly = M.P.

October 1915. It was fully expected that the General Election which followed would bring about a change in the position of parties, but what their relative strength was likely to be it was not easy to foretell. Even the oldest inhabitant—not however, always the wisest or most discriminating observer—was at sea.

The result of the election was that the S.A. Party (including its Independent supporters) lost several seats, and was reduced from over seventy to fifty nine. The Labour Party which under normal conditions would have won a good many seats, was at loggerheads with its 'war on warite' minority, and returned only three or four members; while the Unionist Party, benefitting from the Labour split, came back in an undiminished strength of forty. Most significant of all, the Nationalists returned to the House of Assembly a compact Party of twenty-seven out of a House now numbering a hundred and thirty.¹

The upshot of the election was that no one Party had a majority of its own.

Botha himself in his more sanguine moments had been under the confident belief that he would still retain a majority owing allegiance to himself—a view which I do not think was shared by his colleagues, and certainly not by me. He was proportionately disappointed and depressed at the result of the Election. Instead of being independent with a majority of his own, he was placed in the position that, on critical occasions, he would have to depend on the support of the Unionists to keep

¹ If the Election had been based on proportional representation the Nationalists would have come back some thirty six to thirty eight in number, and Labour about thirteen.

him in Office and to enable him to carry out his policy. He was profoundly convinced that such dependency would greatly weaken the position of his party and his own influence, diminish his opportunities of dealing effectively with the various questions that would arise, and would be a set-back to his national policy of the last few years.

So grave did he consider the position, that he very seriously contemplated resignation. However, after much discussion with his colleagues and with myself, he came to the conclusion that he would not be justified in resigning. The election, it was impressed upon him, had been fought mainly on his person and his policy. At the election the action he had taken in regard to the War generally, at the time of the Rebellion and in reference to German South West, had been supported by the Labour Party as well as by the Unionists, and been endorsed in the Country by an overwhelming majority.

Botha was initially under the impression—an impression shared I think by his colleagues and the public at large—that a dissolution of Parliament automatically brought the Government to an end, and that the Governor General would “have to send for someone to form a Government.” He was considerably relieved in mind when, realising his dilemma, I informed him that, election or no election, he remained in Office until he chose to resign, and that he had not therefore to face and decide the question of whether he would deliberately undertake Office again, but merely whether he should continue as before.

In the end he came to tell me that though gravely disappointed at the result of the election, and though he anticipated serious resultant political and racial

difficulties, he had decided that it was his duty under the circumstances to continue in office. He gradually cheered up and left saying "We shall get over our difficulties. We shall get over them slowly but surely."

III

The Parliament of October 1915 lasted until the General Election of March 1920, and, during that period, there was no substantial change in the comparative position of Parties. In that Parliament therefore, and for the remainder of his life, General Botha had to carry on without an actual majority of his own.

Throughout that period and during those troublous years, the Unionists, believing that the maintenance of General Botha in Office was best for their Country, for the Empire and for the success of the War, gave him their support on critical occasions, not infrequently against their own strong inclinations, and often rendering themselves liable to misunderstanding and misrepresentation in the country and in their constituencies.

A Government without a majority of its own is never free from anxiety or from the possibility, indeed the certainty, of political trouble. Co-operation between two distinct parties without actual coalition or fusion, creates a delicate, and uncomfortable position for both sides ; and the relations between the parliamentary members of the S.A.P. mainly Dutch, and the Unionist Members, purely British, were no exception to the rule.

To the Unionists it often meant the sacrifice of views strongly held. For the S.A.P. it often created a position somewhat humiliating to their pride and irritating to their temper.

Each side, on occasion, not unnaturally considered that the other side was inconsiderate or over-exacting. On the one hand, General Botha would complain that on some question that had arisen "the Unionists had put a pistol to the heads of himself and his party and had made it very difficult to come to terms." His followers he would contend constantly found that while the Unionists supported the Government on definite "Votes of Confidence," they often put the S.A.P. parliamentarily "into a hole and then saved them"; a position damaging to them as a Party and involving loss of prestige to the Government.

On the other hand the leaders of the Unionist Party would contend that the Government too often looked rather to what would be acceptable to the Dutch as a whole, and ignored the feelings and wishes of the British; and that on various occasions when the Government had undertaken to meet their views, the Prime Minister, under pressure from a certain section of his own party, had found himself unable to carry out his undertaking. On different questions that arose such as Oversea Pay, Internment of Germans, Trading with the Enemy, the first Native Affairs Bill, and on other questions where differences of opinion developed, the Unionists complained that they were not infrequently put in the dilemma of either voting against the Government or of refraining from putting forward, or having to withdraw, their proposals.

Privately both sides would, not infrequently, come to me and pour out their respective grievances, utilise the Governor General as a Buffer State, or commandeer his 'cruse of oil.' My usual advice especially to the leaders was "con-

sult together ; talk over the position frankly and freely."

On one occasion when relations had become very much strained, a meeting was arranged between the leaders on both sides, and Botha in his characteristic and good-tempered way opened the discussion by saying "we are all sinners in this matter and I daresay I am the biggest sinner of all." The crisis was avoided and better relations ensued. It was in fact realised on both sides that, in the grave state of affairs which prevailed, an actual breach must at all costs be avoided, and in the end one side or the other would give way with the best grace they could. Gradually as the mutual prejudice against enforced co-operation lost its edge, and as the two sections got to know one another better, more friendly relations prevailed and differences became easier of accommodation.

The obvious solution of the difficulties which necessarily arose from the existence of two different Parties in the House and in the constituencies, and yet dependent upon each other in Parliament, was Coalition or Fusion. The objections to such a course were, however, obviously very great.

"My conviction is," General Botha said to me once, when an acute Parliamentary crisis had occurred and considerable friction had been engendered, "that in present circumstances it is essential to keep responsibility on the shoulders of as many of the Dutch-speaking people as possible" and this attitude he maintained during all the vicissitudes of the War. He feared, moreover, that any attempt to form a coalition or fusion of his party with the exclusively British section, would be misunderstood

by some members of his own party, and might easily lead to secessions.

It is not unnatural therefore that, while the War lasted, the Prime Minister should have shrunk from taking a step which the circumstances of the moment did not appear to make essential nor to justify as a necessity. The time, in his judgment was not ripe for closer relations. I was in agreement with General Botha when he discussed the question with me, as he often did, in believing that a very serious mistake would be made if he attempted to bring about coalition or fusion while the War continued.

The Unionist Party in the House of Assembly, while not entirely in agreement with this view, acquiesced, and continued to give the Prime Minister their support without insisting upon a closer relationship.

The termination of the War, and the altered position of affairs, somewhat modified General Botha's views. Immediately on his return from England in 1919, at his request, representatives of the Unionist Party met him to discuss the position; and it is probable that, if he had lived, something in the nature of the arrangement which took place two years later between the South African Party and the Unionist Party, might have been brought about before long, or more probably after the forthcoming General Election. Botha's premature death, however, ended the discussion for the time being, and it was left to his successor to find a way and to carry through to a successful conclusion, the amalgamation of the two Parties on the basis of fusion and not merely coalition.

One further point may be noted. The amalga-

mation of the two parties necessarily involved one very delicate matter, namely its effect on the personnel of the Cabinet, a question which I know was a source of anxiety to General Botha.

The Union Cabinet is by Statute limited to ten Ministers "with portfolio" (i.e. receiving salaries) though occasionally another Minister was added "without portfolio." During Botha's Prime Ministership the Cabinet consisted of either nine or ten Ministers of whom (at the time of his death) seven were of Dutch and three of British extraction. Any form of coalition would necessarily have involved a drastic reconstruction of the Cabinet and the introduction of a larger 'British' element, and Botha, consequently, would have had to ask some of his 'Dutch' colleagues to stand down in order to make way for Unionists—and very awkward personal and racial questions would have arisen.

When fusion actually took place in 1921 General Smuts was in a more fortunate position. In consequence of vacancies through death or electoral defeat, his Cabinet was reduced to seven, of whom five were of Dutch and two of British descent. He was able, therefore, without displacing any of his existing colleagues (except one who was willing to retire) to invite four new members to join his Cabinet, three of whom were of British and one of Dutch descent; with the result that the reconstructed Cabinet was equally representative of the two races.¹

The Parliament of October 1915 was dissolved in March 1920 after Botha's death. The result of the Election was that the South African Party and the Unionists, not yet amalgamated, together came back

¹ See Appendix II.

with a majority of three only over the Nationalists and Labour combined. The election of a Speaker and of a Chairman of Committee reduced the working majority to one.

This Parliament only met for one Session, being itself dissolved early in 1921. Thanks to the shrewd and powerful leadership of the new Prime Minister and the courage and tact which he showed, to the unfailing support which the Government received from the Unionists, and the not unfriendly attitude of Labour, a very extensive and useful programme of Legislation was placed on the Statute Book, including a far reaching Act dealing with Native Affairs.

Six months later a complete fusion was carried through between the S.A.P. and the Unionist Parties, under the name of the "South African Party," the Cabinet was reconstructed, and Parliament was dissolved.

CHAPTER XI

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

PART I

THE 'OVERSEA PAY' QUESTION

I

My account of General Botha would not be complete, nor give an accurate picture of the surroundings and stormy atmosphere in which his lot was cast during the last few years of his life, nor of the stress and strain to which he was subjected, unless I touched on some of the Parliamentary and other incidents with which he had to contend. More than once the position developed into a crisis of first class magnitude, which might easily have led to the break up of the Government.

The controversy which gave rise to the greatest difficulties and anxieties, and which, one way and another was spread over some eighteen months, was in connection with the pay of the First South African Brigade—the 'Oversea Contingent.' The question first arose in the middle of 1915, when the Union Government offered to provide a Brigade and possibly two for service in Europe.

The British section of the Community, not unnaturally, held from the beginning a decided view that it was the duty of the Union not only to provide the Brigade and to supply the necessary

reinforcements, but to undertake also the full cost of the Contingent and not to throw any portion of it on the Imperial Government. They pressed especially that at the least the Union ought to make up the difference between the rate of pay of the Brigade as Imperial troops and the customary Union rate of pay.¹ They contended that it was unfair to the men who joined the Oversea Contingent, and to their dependents, that they should not receive the same amount as those who had been through the German South West Campaign, or those who would take part in the German East Campaign. It was further pointed out that the inadequate amount of pay greatly hampered recruiting for service in Europe.

The Dutch-speaking section, on the other hand, for the most part insisted that the Union had incurred heavy cost, first in connection with the Rebellion (some five or six millions) and then in connection with the German South West Campaign (some fifteen millions) while heavy liabilities would be involved through the material share that the Union was about to take in the German East Campaign. The country they considered was not therefore in a position, nor would it be fair to expect it to undertake a direct liability for the Oversea Contingent after the men had left South Africa.

The Union Government, in their original communication to the Imperial Government in June 1915 voiced the latter view. They stated that, while anxious to raise a Brigade for service overseas, they did not see their way to provide from Union funds the expenditure involved in meeting the pay of the

¹ The ordinary Union Defence pay for a private was roughly 3s. a day, the Imperial rate was then 1s. day.

Contingent at Union rates. They stated, moreover, that as the House of Assembly was not in Session it would be necessary to summon a special Session of Parliament to authorise the necessary expenditure, and this the Union Government did not consider feasible.

General Botha himself and some of his colleagues desired to meet the cost of the extra pay, and I believed at the time, and have thought since, that if the Government at the very beginning had faced the question before an agitation had arisen on either side, they would have, at that time, obtained a general assent to the proposal, and future trouble would have been avoided.

But a General Election took place in October, soon after the Contingent was in process of formation, which materially altered the position. The disappearance of his majority deprived the Prime Minister of the control over his Party in the House which he otherwise would have had; and with a difference of opinion in his Cabinet and a difference of opinion amongst his followers, he did not feel himself in a strong enough position to force through the proposal.

II

At the Special Session which took place immediately after the General Election the question of the pay was raised. But, thanks to the patriotic action of the Unionists, who accepted the situation, though with great reluctance and only out of loyalty to Botha, the difficulty was at that time surmounted.

But before long an active agitation arose on the subject amongst the British section, and a persistent demand that the whole pay or at least the excess should be met, and it was announced that the

Unionist Party would move in the matter as soon as Parliament again met.

Thus a very serious position arose when the question had to be again considered by the Government in anticipation of the meeting of the House in ordinary Session in February 1916. In the Cabinet there were differences of opinion ; but in the end it was agreed that they should go to the Caucus as a united Cabinet, and propose the payment of the excess pay subject to certain deductions, and that if the Caucus endorsed the proposal the dissentients would acquiesce.

When however General Botha and his Cabinet met their parliamentary party they found them somewhat hostile and suspicious, and strong opposition to the proposed compromise developed. It became clear that if the proposal were pressed it would cause a dangerous split in the party. The active campaign which had taken place in favour of the payment had—such is human nature Dutch or British—put up the back of the Caucus, and they resented being dictated to by the Unionists. It transpired, moreover, that the military liabilities in which the Union was involved in regard to German East and in other ways, exceeded the original estimate by some two and a half millions.

Some of the most staunch and loyal of the Prime Minister's followers, who had been through the Rebellion and the German South West Campaign, went so far as to declare that, while out of loyalty to Botha they would vote for the proposal if it were pressed, they would have to resign their seats as they were sure their vote would be contrary to the views of their constituents. Some of the Members again, not fully realising the position, had at

the late election pledged themselves against the proposal.

Botha made an impressive Speech urging his views strongly on the meeting. Finally, after two days' discussion, when it had become evident that if the proposal were pressed it would result in a serious division in the party and on racial lines, the British section of the Caucus announced that they would accept the adverse decision, and were prepared to vote against the Unionist Motion.

During the days of crisis General Botha was very much upset over the whole affair. "I have," he told me "been very unhappy and anxious about the position. I do not easily get nervous, but last night I was very nervous. I did not sleep at all; getting up and walking about. There seemed to be no way out." His main anxiety was to avoid any vital difference developing either in the Cabinet or in the Caucus on racial lines. "I am neither pro-Dutch nor pro-English (he said to me), I have stood out against such a policy for ten years . . . such a position I could not and would not tolerate"; it would be an abnegation of his whole policy, and he could not see his life work wrecked. Finally he came to the conclusion that to press the proposal would lead to the very position he was strenuously determined to avoid, and the only solution was to withdraw the Cabinet proposal.

In the end Sir Thomas Smartt, in view of the political difficulties that had arisen, and in view of the undertaking announced by the Government that they would contribute a substantial sum to the general purposes of the War, withdrew the Motion he had put down calling on the Government to provide for the payment of the excess pay. A

Motion similar in substance was however moved by a Labour Member and pressed to a division, but received no support except from the Labour Party.

In the debate that ensued, Botha handled the whole position with courage and straightforwardness, and made his position clear with complete candour and lucidity. He declared himself as being personally strongly in favour of the payment. He was, he said, an Africander absolutely loyal to the British Empire in this War. "We have done our utmost to preserve peace and order in this Country. We have done our utmost to bring to a successful conclusion the campaign in German South West." The matter in question he emphasised, was not one of pounds, shillings and pence; but there was strong opposition to it on the part of some of his party, and though he had done his utmost he had found it impossible to obtain their assent. "The most unfortunate position that we could create to-day (he went on to say) would be, on such a Motion as this, to divide the Boers and the British in this House. This would be more fatal to our living together in this country than anything else. . . . If it takes place, it is my sacred duty to resign immediately, and if we are to divide on racial lines it will not take me an hour to resign. . . . To divide the people on this matter at the present time is wrong, and is in conflict with the true and real interests of South Africa. We must continue to give our help until the Empire emerges from its trouble."

The position he had been forced to take up went very much against the grain. "It was," he said, when he came to see me next day, "a damnable thing to do to have to speak against a motion in

the justice of which I believed. I feel very uncomfortable. It was a bad job, but I had to consider my party." He added that he thought he had made the position clear, and he was sure there was no other way out, and it would have been the "greatest mistake in my life if I had not done as I did." He felt assured that his stalwarts would not have easily forgiven him for putting them in such an awkward position—"as it was they were all happy and content and full of gratitude to me."

III

The crisis of February 1916 did not however by any means end the matter. In September and October of that year the question was again mooted in the country. In view especially of the heroic deeds of the "Springboks" at Delville Wood and elsewhere a month or two previously, it was generally felt that the Union was failing to do its share in adequately reinforcing the Oversea Brigade, and that volunteering was being greatly checked by the inadequacy of the pay and of the separation allowances, and the glaring difference in the position of those who had gone to Europe compared with those who were fighting in German East.

Botha realised and appreciated these views when temperately expressed ; but he strongly condemned those who, while aggressively urging the increased pay, denounced in no measured terms what they were pleased to designate the disloyalty and backwardness of the Dutch. Such speeches, he said to me, "will raise trouble between Dutch and English as sure as I am sitting here, and they are driving my people away from me." On the other hand he complained of his own party in making so much

of the matter—"great mountains out of small molehills."

The whole question was again considered by the Cabinet in October 1916. The substance of their conclusions was embodied in a communication sent to the Imperial Government in December, in which the Union Government stated that they hoped to reinforce the Oversea Contingent with men who had been serving in German East, but regretted that they were not in a position to undertake to provide the excess pay of the Contingent from Union Funds. But as a set off they undertook to ask Parliament to pay a lump sum of at least a million sterling for general war purposes, in addition to other war expenditure of some £1,600,000 for which they were liable.

The Imperial Government came to their assistance, and in their reply of December 26th while pointing out that it was difficult for them to undertake to pay to the South African Contingent, who were part of the Imperial Forces, a rate of pay in excess of that paid to the other units, they expressed their high appreciation of the desire of the Union Government to give all further possible assistance in the vigorous prosecution of the war. In order to meet the view of the Union Government, and to remove any obstacles in their participation in the war, they stated that they were, under the circumstances, prepared to pay the South African troops already or hereafter to be enlisted for service oversea, at Union rates. The Union Government desired me to convey to the Secretary of State their high appreciation of the attitude which His Majesty's Government had adopted and the assistance that they were giving. "The last recurrent attack (I wrote to

the Secretary of State) of Oversea malarial fever, which was much milder than its predecessor has now subsided."

The third and final crisis in connection with the Pay arose early in the following session, in February 1917. On the first day of the Session Sir Thomas Smartt, dissatisfied with what he believed to be the financial proposals of the Government in regard to the War, tabled a Resolution the gist of which was to urge the Government to meet the pay of the Oversea Contingent and not to leave it as a burden on the Imperial Government.

"The Government," the Prime Minister told me definitely, "were determined to tackle the question in all earnestness and meant to bring it to a final decision this Session; and if at the Caucus I do not get a majority of the Dutch-speaking representatives my Government can hand in their resignation before Parliament meets."

General Botha met his Caucus and put before them the whole position and the contributions which the Union Government proposed that Parliament should make for war purposes. At first the Caucus, annoyed at the Resolution which they considered an attempt to force their hand, were somewhat hostile to the proposals of the Government. But in the end the Prime Minister, was able to persuade them to his view; and the Leader of the Unionists withdrew his Motion on the ground that the Government (as the correspondence then just published showed) were intending themselves to make a substantial contribution to the war. "In spite of the thunder clouds and the electric atmosphere, the air has gradually cleared again." ¹

¹ Letter to Secretary of State.

Finally, in April 1919, the question was raised whether the difference of pay should not be made retrospective, and be paid by the Union Government from the date of enlistment until December 31st 1916, from which date the Imperial Government had met the excess. The temperature went up for a time, but it again fell to normal, and the Oversea Pay controversy was finally laid to rest.

PART II

THE WOOL QUESTION

OTHER political crises involving the fate of the Government emerged from time to time. The Wool affair was one of these, and as far as I was concerned, gave me almost more trouble and anxiety than any other that arose.

About the end of May 1917 the Imperial Government offered to purchase the whole wool clip of the Union for the coming year, 1917-18, at the same price that they had offered to, and which had been accepted by the Australian and New Zealand Governments for the whole clips of these two Dominions respectively.¹ The price offered was 55 % above the average ruling price paid during the twelve months prior to August 1914

It so happened that during the initial stages of the affair, Botha, who had not been well, was away on his farm trying to get a rest, and I was also away travelling in the Transkei and elsewhere. The first public announcement of the offer and the resulting negotiations and conferences with the farmers, were not altogether judiciously handled, and the offer itself was not clearly explained to, nor fully understood by the farmers concerned. A general

¹ The Imperial Government also, at the request of the Union Government, agreed to purchase the unsold balance of the wool clip of 1916-17.

impression was conveyed that the Imperial Government, with the concurrence of the Union Government, intended to commandeer the wool at a fixed price. The result was that the question, at its initial stages, got involved in a tangle of prejudice and misrepresentation which became difficult to unravel and out of which a very serious political position developed. Indeed, if it had not been that the Imperial Government throughout treated the Union Government and the farming interest with wonderful consideration and generosity, a most serious crisis would have supervened, resulting in the almost certain defeat of the Government when Parliament met, followed by their resignation.

After some correspondence with the Imperial Government and inquiries in the Union, the Union Government informed the Imperial Government, in September, that they saw no prospect of carrying through the sale of the whole clip, since they were not prepared to prohibit the export of wool to other countries, while part of the new clip had already been sold. The Imperial Government, though they had considered it an essential consideration of the offer that the whole of the clip should be secured as in the case of Australia and New Zealand, agreed, under the circumstances, and at the request of the Union Government, to purchase such portion only of the 1917-18 clip as the Union growers might desire to offer.

The Government in issuing a leaflet containing the correspondence strongly advised the farmers to sell their wool to the Imperial Government ; and about a third of the clip was offered and came under the scheme.

Almost immediately afterwards, however, an un-

expected demand, mainly for the best wools, arose from Japan and the United States, while considerably more freight than had been anticipated became available for taking it away. The result was that the wool market which had been stagnant, suddenly revived, and prices, especially for the better class wool, rapidly rose to considerably above the figure offered by the Imperial Government. Not unnaturally, those who had accepted the offer of the Imperial Government were disappointed and dissatisfied at finding that many of those who had stood out were obtaining better prices. Those who had gone into the scheme were, for the most part, supporters of the Government, and were now naturally somewhat chagrined to find that they were apparently to suffer for their loyalty to the Government.

At the same time the position was exploited by the opponents of the Government who urged that the interests of the Imperial Government had been put above those of the farmers.

A serious position arose, which by December had become very grave. Early in December General Botha came over to Pretoria from his farm—a six to seven hours' journey—to see me in order to discuss the matter, and a few days later he wrote to me “I am worried to death about the wool question, and foresee very serious trouble resulting through it, . . . a position might arise in connection with the loyal section of the Dutch Community when I would have no right to continue in office. I must consider my position seriously. But (he added) I do not, however, intend doing anything until I have again seen you.” He was so much disturbed about the matter that a few days later he again came over from his farm to see me. He was

still gravely disturbed, and emphasised all that he had said in his letter. His main preoccupation now was the Parliamentary position, which would arise when the House met. He was sure that a Motion would be moved to compensate any farmers who had lost by the acceptance of the Imperial Government's offer, and this would not only split his own people, but almost certainly lead to the defeat of the Government.

After considerable discussion, we agreed that the only method of solving the difficulty would be if the Imperial Government (with whom I had already been in private communication) would be prepared to release those who so desired from the bargain they had made. Such a proposal was most distasteful to Botha as he disliked extremely any idea of breaking a bargain. But, finally, with the full assent of his colleagues, a telegram was sent to the Imperial Government on January 6th, 1918 detailing the position which had arisen with regard to freights and prices, and asking the Imperial Government, with an expression of regret, whether they would, under the circumstances, be prepared to release from their agreement those wool farmers who now desired to be released.

The Imperial Government promptly replied on the 10th January that, though they considered their original offer had been, and was still a fair one, they appreciated that a greater demand for South African wool had arisen in Japan and the United States, and that more freight had been forthcoming than could possibly have been anticipated. Under these circumstances, and at the request of the Union Government, they were prepared they stated to allow those who had voluntarily come

into the scheme to go out of it if they so desired.¹ Thus the knot was cut, and the crisis came to an end.

Botha was greatly relieved at the decision of the Imperial Government, and expressed his deep appreciation and that of his Government for their action.

A certain number of the farmers took advantage of this generous offer ; and, so far as the Imperial Government was concerned, it was a case of ' much cry and little wool.'

It may be noted that in the end those who remained in the scheme did not do badly. When the accounts of the whole transaction were finally wound up a considerable profit was shown. The Union Government received from the Imperial Government for its share a sum of £361,000, which, when distributed among the participants, gave them a bonus of 2·22*d.* per pound of wool sold to the Government, bringing the average price up to 15·8*d.* which (except as regards the extra quality wool), was a price which the farmers would have found it hard to obtain in the open market.

It may be added that, towards the end of the year 1920 and the beginning of 1921, the wool market in South Africa had become absolutely lifeless and farmers were unable to dispose of their wool. With a view to obtain their assistance in the matter, negotiations were entered into by the Union Government with the Imperial Government. The Imperial Government, in spite of their experiences in 1917, at once agreed to help the Union out of its difficulties by purchasing up to 100,000 bales of the 1919-20 season's clip on the basis of 1913-14 season's prices, plus half profits. These terms were considered very liberal, and the market being at the

¹ The correspondence was published in the local Press.

time at a standstill, it was anticipated that the Imperial Government would be faced with a considerable loss. The market, however, recovered shortly afterwards and instead of a loss a profit was made, half of which was paid to the Union Government, and some £80,000 to £85,000 was distributed to the participants of the scheme.

PART III

OTHER ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

THERE were at least two other Parliamentary crises, which raised unforeseen storms and jeopardised the life of the Government. Though the questions involved were themselves of very minor importance they made me anxious, for not infrequently a strong Government, like a good horse, while it takes its fences beautifully, sometimes pecks over a grip and comes unexpectedly to grief.

The first question arose early in the Session of 1917 in connection with a Bill introduced by the Government to deal with certain aspects of the financial relations between the Provincial Councils and the Union Government.

When Botha came to see me to discuss the critical position which had arisen on a particular clause of the Bill, he was greatly worried and depressed and looked ill, and told me that he thought he would probably be beaten. "He reminded me (so I wrote to the Secretary of State), that eighteen months before as I knew, when he found he had not obtained a majority at the election he had desired to resign, as he knew how difficult his position would be, but that he had finally subordinated this view to his desire to render every assistance in carrying on the War. He had, he said, always regretted this necessity, though he felt that it had

been his duty, for, as he had contemplated, the attempt to carry on without a party majority led to perpetual humiliation, endless difficulties, and increasing loss of influence. Botha added that his was the only section in the House that was not a separate and independent Party. I did my best to cheer him up and to express my admiration and gratitude for his past services, and for the courage resource and self-sacrifice which he had shown throughout. He was evidently feeling more discouragement than I had ever seen him show before."

A day or two afterwards when I saw the General again, he was in better spirits, and he assured me that he would do his best and go very far to find an accommodation, and to persuade his followers to support him. The next day he came to tell me that "he had swallowed the pill and would drop the obnoxious clause." His heart, he said, was very sore and he would carry on very much against his will, but he thought it the right thing to do.

He went on to say that he was very uncomfortable in his mind about the parliamentary difficulties which were perpetually arising when he was trying to do his duty. I rallied him by saying "You must remember you are not alone in that feeling. Every Prime Minister in every Session would like to shut up Parliament, take away the Bauble and be independent of Parliamentary criticism," and that he would probably worry through all right.

The other question which caused some anxiety was one connected with Mining Leases which arose in the following year in March 1918. Considerable opposition developed to the proposals of the Government in the matter (an intricate question), and finally

they decided, that instead of treating the question as one of Confidence as they had originally intended, it should be left an open question.

When the matter came to be discussed in the House the Government proposals, which had been misunderstood and misrepresented, were received with favour ; and the proposal was finally accepted by an unexpectedly large majority of 69 to 36. This particular affair strengthened the Government and raised their prestige with their own supporters and with the House generally.

PART IV

THE GERMANS IN THE UNION

BESIDES these Parliamentary crises there were, of course, a good crop of other acute questions which arose during the War, which, though they did not involve the existence of the Government, added much to the anxieties of the Prime Minister and of his 'colleagues.

The most important and worrying of these (as I see on looking through my notes) were those connected with the Germans in the Union.

A considerable number of Germans had from time to time settled in the Union. In 1857 some four thousand of the German Legion who had fought for us as mercenaries in the Crimean War and for whom provision had to be made, were settled by Sir George Grey in the Eastern Province of the Cape Colony. In the seventies, another German colony was established near Cape Town by the Cape Government of the day. These German settlers had proved themselves to be law-abiding and excellent citizens, though some of them for various reasons had retained their German nationality. Besides, there were other German citizens living in the Union.

South Africa was a long way from the seat of war, and it was not probable that the Germans in the Union would or could constitute any particular danger nor do any particular harm. In many cases,

indeed, their internment was carried out as much for their own protection as for that of the State.

But in the Union, for reasons already given, all matters connected with the German residents in the country were bound, under the circumstances, to cause friction and feeling, and had the grave disadvantage of accentuating the differing racial view as to the way that the Germans should be treated during the war, and after.

The three main matters which caused friction and controversy were the internment of German Nationals during the war; the repatriation of the Germans at the end of the war; and the anti-German riots which occurred in some of the big towns.

The total number of Germans interned during the War at Maritzburg was about 2,500, while some 1,700 besides were out on parole at different times in different parts of the Union. In addition some hundreds of Germans had been sent down from German East and other parts of Africa for internment in the Union.

A certain section of the British, mainly from Natal, continually pressed for the internment of every German in South Africa; while those who took the extreme view on the other side, blamed the Government for interning as many Germans as they felt it their duty to do. As Botha expressed it to me, he was, in this matter, between the Devil and the Deep Sea—a considerable section of the British on the one side, and a large section of the Dutch on the other. If he interned sparingly the Devil would howl and disturb his own people; if he interned freely the Deep Sea would roar and threaten to engulf him.

In 1919 it was decided that those who were still interned should be released on the signing of Peace ; and the first batches were sent to their homes in September of that year. The policy pursued was to release the interned in small parties of twenty or thirty a day, and to send them away in ordinary trains so as not to attract public attention. They were warned that they must go back quietly, and that they must keep quiet, and in their own interest they should as far as possible for the time being efface themselves. It is satisfactory to note that no difficulties occurred in connection with their release, and that they themselves behaved then and have behaved since as good citizens.

The repatriation of certain classes of Germans at the end of the war also gave rise to a good deal of feeling. In the Governor General's Speech at the opening of the Session of 1919, it was announced that, on the one hand, an Amnesty Bill would be introduced to remove the disqualifications of those who had taken part in the Rebellion, and, on the other, that a Bill dealing with the Repatriation of Enemy Subjects would be introduced.

The Amnesty Bill met with general approval ; and as regards the Repatriation Bill, there was a general feeling against anything in the nature of persecution or of the repatriation of those who had been living peaceably in the Union. The Bill was carefully drawn in accordance with this view, and the Second Reading was carried by a large majority. The Bill was referred to a Select Committee where it was somewhat modified. As the Session went on the Bill was from time to time postponed ; and finally it became clear that its introduction and

other causes had practically secured the object in view, and the Measure having justified its existence was dropped.

On the original introduction of the Bill the Minister in charge stated that a large number of those interned had expressed their desire to be repatriated, that there were others of German nationality who were not domiciled in the Union, while yet others had shown themselves to be a danger to the State. In addition a considerable number of Germans had been sent down for temporary internment from other parts of South Africa. He estimated that some 1,200 persons would be repatriated under the Bill. In withdrawing the Bill at the end of the Session the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Malan) gave figures which showed that since the introduction of the Bill over a thousand persons had been in normal course repatriated, a large proportion of whom, some 700 or 800, had themselves reiterated their desire to be repatriated. Under the circumstances he said that the Government had come to the conclusion that it was not worth while for the sake of dealing with a few remaining 'suspects' to proceed with the Bill.

There was a good story current about some of these repatriates. A train load of Germans from the Internment Camp at Maritzburg were being sent down to Cape Town for embarkation. The Officer in charge telegraphed to one of the principal towns in the Free State, requesting the Station master to provide tea, etc., for so many persons who would be passing through and without stating who they were. The station master jumped to the conclusion that the passengers must be returned soldiers, and so informed the Mayor and others. The town in question is in a Nationalist centre, and

was captured and occupied by the rebels during the Rebellion. The loyalist section thought that this would be a capital opportunity of showing their loyalty—and also incidentally, of annoying the ‘rebel’ section. So they mustered in force at the station ; and, as the train steamed in, the occupants were received with cheers, flag-flapping, and the National Anthem, and food and cigarettes were ready in abundance. Great was the disillusionment when the train came to a stop. It is supposed, however, to have been just as well for the German repatriates to realise how many loyalists there were in the place, and to be received with “ God Save the King.”

In May 1915 an incident occurred which fanned the flame and accentuated the feeling generally in regard to the treatment of the Germans in the Union. The sinking of the “ Lusitania ” was taken much to heart by the British, and happened unfortunately to coincide with a feeling of irritation which had arisen in regard to the alleged laxity of the internment of enemy subjects. The result was that in Johannesburg in the first instance, and subsequently in Cape Town, in Durban and in one or two of the towns in the Eastern Province, there was a sudden outburst of fury against the Germans, which culminated in the destruction of property and the burning of buildings which were supposed to belong to Germans. As a matter of fact a large proportion of the property that was destroyed was only nominally German and really belonged to British subjects who had to bear the loss.

These anti-German riots created a feeling of deep resentment amongst the Dutch-speaking

section and there was a tendency on the part of both sections of the community to throw the blame upon the Government for not having taken sufficient precautions to prevent the rioting that had occurred.

To Botha these doings were anathema. In a letter to me from Karibib in German South West, he denounced "the recent scandalous and deplorable outbreak of blind fury against the German population in the Union," so contrary was it to his general ideas of moderation and fair play.

CHAPTER XII

THE TWO WHITE RACES

PART I

BRITISH AND DUTCH

I

THE early history of the two white races, Dutch and British, in South Africa, forms a melancholy story of a century of opportunities thrown away, of misunderstandings and mis-management, suspicion and jealousy, vacillation on the part of the Powers-that-Were, which culminated in the South African War.

Not only in the past, but of recent years as well, a sad fatality has attended the relations between the two races. Some thirty years ago Hofmeyr and the Bond, Rhodes and the British, were working together, and racialism was in a fair way to disappear in the Cape Colony. Then came, in December 1895, the Jameson Raid which undid their work, and led almost inevitably, step by step, to the South African War of 1899 to 1902.

These two disastrous set-backs were partly retrieved, first by the grant of Responsible Government to the Transvaal and to the Orange River Colony in 1906-07; and then, by the still greater step in the direction of Self-government, the Union

of the four Provinces into one Dominion. The advent of Union definitely and in terms placed the two white races on a footing of absolute equality, and brought to an end that aspect of racialism which had been based on a prolonged and bitter struggle for supremacy.

It is not always easy to realise to what extent, even now, racialism influences the affairs of the Union. Elsewhere, problems social, economic and industrial, political and personal, are discussed and decided more or less on their merits. In the Union, over and above the merits, there is constantly in mind the racial effect which a particular method of dealing with a particular problem may produce. The intricacies of each and every question—and most questions in South Africa are intricate enough—are intensified by this factor, and the solution often made less easy.

II

From the point of view of the relations between those of Dutch and of British descent who are domiciled in the Union, and their mutual interests, it is somewhat unfortunate that there is no one term which can be held to include both.

The two White Races in South Africa are habitually spoken of as 'Dutch' and 'English.' The British, however, are not only English, but include Scottish, Welsh and Irish as well as citizens from other parts of the Empire; while the Dutch-speaking people are not 'Dutch' in the ordinary European sense of the term.

The parent stock of the Dutch-speaking section of the population of South Africa, with its infusion of Huguenot and other European blood, may be

said to date from near the end of the Seventeenth Century.

The population of Cape Town and district in 1688 (exclusive of the Dutch East India Company's Establishment), hailed mainly from the Netherlands and numbered only about 570. That year, and subsequent years, saw the arrival of the Huguenots—French subjects who had found refuge from persecution in Holland, and were sent out to the Cape.¹ They numbered under two hundred.

These immigrants were not to remain a separate race nor to retain their own language. Drastic measures were taken by the Dutch authorities; and soon, to all intents and purposes, the French Huguenots were absorbed by the Dutch settlers. Their features and their names, however, still survive. De Villiers, Celliers, Malan, Botha are common South African names of Huguenot origin; though, in most cases, the French pronunciation has been lost—Celliers for instance has become 'Celyee' Du Toit 'Deetoy.'

In 1691 the whole European population of the Cape District amounted to little more than a thousand; and during subsequent years there was but little infusion of fresh blood from Holland. This was not surprising, for while the Cape and its hinterland were yet under Netherlands rule, the distance from Europe, and the length and discomforts of the voyage, discouraged immigration. Then in 1806 the Country came under British rule, and direct communications, at no time active nor frequent between Holland and South Africa, practically ceased.

¹ See Mr. Botha's (Keeper of the Archives) interesting little volume, *The French Refugees at the Cape*, which deals with the arrival and subsequent treatment of the Huguenots.

For over a century, therefore, the South African Dutch have been more directly associated politically and economically with Great Britain than with Holland ; and during the last hundred years, have absorbed and assimilated more British than Netherlands blood.

I remember the late Sir Meiring Beck telling me that, while *Africander Dutch*, he had English and Scottish, French and German blood in his veins. In the Free State, especially during the time of President Brand, inter-marriage between the Dutch and Scottish settlers was not infrequent, partly due no doubt to the kinship between the Dutch Reformed and the Scottish Presbyterian Churches.¹

Thus, for some two hundred years South Africa has been the abiding place—'Ons Land'—of the descendants of the original settlers who were but a handful, and of their courageous women folk, whose seed has become as the sand of the seashore for multitude. To the Dutch-speaking South African, South Africa is emphatically his Home. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather were almost certainly born in South Africa and not in Holland. He speaks the South African Taal (or "Afrikaans") and the High Dutch of the Netherlands is to him almost a foreign language. The Dutch, who may have come from Holland of recent years, few

¹ In some cases, not only in the Free State but elsewhere, the Scottish strain has become completely absorbed by the Dutch strain. I remember on one occasion some time after the Rebellion, when General Botha came to see me he shewed me a Petition in Dutch which had been presented to him on behalf of certain Rebels in the Free State. He said to me with some glee "Your people often say that it is we Dutch who are rebels. Now look at this Petition." I looked at the Petition and the first three names were undeniably Scotch.

in numbers, are spoken of as 'Hollanders.'¹ In the old days of the South African Republic, 'Hollanders,' like Dr. Leyds and others, were brought into the country in order that their brains and their experience might be utilised. But there never was, as it were, any free-masonry between them and the Dutch Afrianders.

The Dutch in South Africa are therefore a distinct entity, and in a sense a separate Nation, or perhaps, as Olive Schreiner puts it "rather a Clan or Family than a Nation."² They have as a whole at the back of their minds—in a religious rather than in any arrogant sense—the feeling that they are "God's people." They pride themselves on the fact that they were the white race who first occupied and opened up the country, and brought it under civilisation. Whether their particular ancestors took part in the Great Trek of 1836-40 or no, they still recall with pride and sympathy that desperate attempt to escape the yoke of Authority, and the indomitable pluck shown by the voortrekkers. They can never forget that, after the arrival of the English, they were harried and pursued, and that gradually, assiduously or by force, and due to the inexorable trend of events, they have been constrained to become citizens of the British Empire. Territorial absorption they have, after a century of contest, been unable to avoid; they are passionately anxious that their individuality and their language should survive.

¹ According to the Census of 1921 the total number of persons living in the Union who were born in Holland was 5,300, out of a White population of 1,500,000, of whom 1,280,000 were born in the Union. See Appendix IV.

² *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 74.

For some years after the final cession of the Cape to Great Britain in 1814, the Dutch inhabitants constituted the entire European population at the Cape, with the exception of the British officials and soldiers and a few merchants.

In 1820—a landmark in South African history—four or five thousand English, Scottish, and Welsh immigrants were brought from the United Kingdom and were settled in the Eastern Province of the Cape. Others dribbled in, and twenty years later some thousands of British immigrants were introduced into Natal, and a slow but gradually increasing stream of immigration from the United Kingdom followed. Subsequently this immigration was suddenly and greatly accelerated, first by the discovery of diamond mines at Kimberley about fifty years ago, and then by the gold rush to the Rand some fifteen years later.

Decade by decade an ever larger proportion of the population of British descent have come under the category of "South African born."¹ It is true that the descendant of an '1820 Settler,' or of other early British immigrants, and whose family has lived for two or even three generations in South Africa, still speaks of England as "Home." But, nevertheless, these, as well as those who have come later and who have made their actual home in South Africa as permanent citizens of the Union, are whole-heartedly interested in the Country, its liberties and its self-dependence.

No accurate figures can be given to shew the relative proportions of the two White Races in the Union, as the Census does not distinguish between them. It is roughly estimated that of the present

¹ See Appendix IV.

total white population of just over a million and a half, considerably over 800,000 may be classed as 'Dutch,' and somewhat over 600,000 as 'British.' The others, mainly Jews and Greeks, number probably from sixty to seventy thousand.

PART II

RACIALISM

ONE of the main objects which animated the Statesmen who brought about Union was the ameliorating effect they hoped and believed it would have on the relations between the two white races in eliminating racialism and racial grouping.

With Union any question of the domination of the one Race over the other, of differential treatment, or of absorption that would imply loss of race or of individuality, passed away for ever.

There is doubtless still some arrogance on the one side and suspicion on the other. An Englishman was swaggering about the extent of the British Empire "on which the Sun never set." "No, of course not," retorted a Nationalist, with much humour, "the Lord could not trust the English in the dark." As a corrective to this I remember on one occasion Botha was talking to me about the rebel prisoners. "This is a wonderful world (he said), I have just had a request from X (one of the most active of the O.F.S. rebel leaders, then still in gaol) to be allowed out on parole for two or three days in order to attend the wedding of his daughter, who is about to be married to an Englishman who cannot speak a word of Dutch."

It can be held, I think, with truth, that "the two Races are learning more and more to appreciate

what in the past they had regarded as each other's shortcomings." ¹ After all, the political differences that developed subsequent to Union but before the Great War, were more in the nature of differences between the two sections of the Dutch-speaking race than in themselves racial.

The War, as regards South Africa and the Union, came prematurely, and at a most unfortunate moment, and brought with it much nervous strain, bitterness, antagonism, and unrest, and seemingly accentuated racial feeling. But here, again, the differences which arose out of the War were rather between the two sections of the Dutch-speaking people than between the British and the Dutch.

It is not unprofitable to note, moreover that in one respect the object in view is actually being attained, though not indeed in the way anticipated at the time of the Union Convention, nor brought about by the factors then in mind.

While of late years there has been a cleavage in the Dutch-speaking ranks, to which reference has just been made, there has at the same time, thanks to the Labour movement, been a division, and a fundamentally increasing division of the British section into two distinct and antagonistic camps. As a result of these two movements, a re-grouping of political Parties has come about—S.A.P. and Unionists fused together on the one side, Nationalists and Labour under a working agreement on the other—and a new position has arisen which has cut across racial divisions.

The old South African Party was predominantly

¹ General Hertzog in House of Assembly (July 1923) speaking in reference to the late Mr. C. Fichardt.

Dutch, though it contained a considerable British element; the Unionist Party was wholly British. These two have now been fused into one Party. At the same time the Nationalist Party wholly Dutch, and the Labour Party almost wholly British, intend, it is announced, to co-operate together at least for electoral purposes.

Politically therefore, South Africa, as far as the next Election is concerned, is divided into two camps neither of them predominantly 'Dutch' and neither of them predominantly 'British.'

Such a re-grouping—whatever view is taken of it on other grounds—is, from the racial aspect, healthier and safer for the Country than the distinct racial grouping which existed in former days, and indeed until quite recently. The 'one stream' policy of General Botha is apparently, in a curious and unforeseen way, to come about. There may still be two streams, but the sources will be no longer racial.

South Africa rejoices in Liberty and Equality; racial Fraternity will follow in due course.

PART III

GRANT OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

IN certain quarters—not, I think, in South Africa—it is sometimes asserted that the outbreak of the Rebellion was a proof that the policy of trust and toleration has in essence failed in South Africa; and that if, after the South African War, the step-by-step policy, as applied to the two annexed Territories, had not been recklessly superseded by the premature grant of Responsible Government to the Transvaal and to the Orange River Colony, all would have been well.

The truth and the facts seem to lie in exactly the contrary direction; and all that has since occurred would appear to constitute a complete and visible justification of the policy which gave Responsible Government to the Transvaal and to the Free State, and which led up to, and was followed by Union four years later.

It is true that the sanguine hopes of 1906, and again of 1910, have not been entirely fulfilled, but nevertheless, the balance is enormously on the right side. When War came and the Rebellion took place, the Dutch-speaking people as a whole showed themselves fully worthy of the trust that had been reposed in them and of the responsibility which had been placed upon them. The ineffectiveness of the outbreak and its speedy suppression, bore striking

testimony to the value and success of the policy that had been carried out.

What, indeed, would have been the position if, instead of the grant of Responsible Government in 1906, Representative Government had in 1905 been forced upon the Transvaal, and not been even extended to the Orange River Colony? The Dutch people, the 'old population,' led by Botha and Smuts, would, as we know, have continued to decline to take part or lot in the responsibilities of Government. It is certain that difficulties and friction would have continued, and indeed increased between the Dutch-speaking population and the British Authorities.

But as it was, at the outbreak of War the Executive of the country was under the complete control of a Parliament freely elected, and the Government was composed of a Cabinet drawn mainly from the Dutch-speaking section of the community. If it had been otherwise, and if a non-representative Government had still been supreme in the two Colonies, the Dutch burghers of the Transvaal and of the Free State would have felt no responsibility, or that they owed any debt of gratitude or were under any sense of obligation to Great Britain.

Under such conditions when War broke out it would have been idle to expect the sympathy and co-operation of the Dutch-speaking section in either of the annexed Territories.

What might have happened it is idle to surmise, but at least the whole position would have been fundamentally different. It might have been impossible safely to withdraw the Imperial troops, indeed, they might have had to be reinforced ; and,

in any case, the material help given to the Empire in German South West and German East and Oversea would not have been forthcoming to anything approaching the same degree.

Moreover, and this is a vital matter, unless Responsible Government had been granted not only to the Transvaal but to Orange River Colony as well, in 1906-7, the Union of the Four Provinces could not possibly have come into being by 1910, nor been in existence when war came.

Undoubtedly the existence of a Central Government covering all four Provinces, and the fact that the Government in Office was mainly of Dutch extraction, proved to be a factor of paramount importance in 1914. As Botha said at the S.A.P. Conference in August 1915: "I tremble to think what might have happened at the outbreak of the War and the Rebellion, if the Union had not been accomplished then, and if they had not had power to take action as one State, and had still been divided into four States with different views and divided counsels."

The Union was in itself a great bulwark and a sobering influence. Then the fact that there was one Defence (War) Department for the whole of the Union, under the control of one Minister, instead of four separate Defence Departments under four separate Governments, enabled the Minister for Defence, and the Commander-in-Chief in the field, to utilise the forces of the Union to the best advantage, in connection with the German South West and German East Campaigns. It was possible, moreover, to mobilise and utilise the Forces as a whole for the suppression of the Rebellion without the provincial or racial invidious-

ness or hostility which would otherwise inevitably have arisen, and which might easily have turned what was, under Union, an isolated and spasmodic revolt, swiftly suppressed, into a wide-spread Civil War.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NATIVES

BOTHA AND THE NATIVES—CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR

I

It is necessary to say something of General Botha's views and attitude in regard to the Natives, but I have no intention of discussing the Native question in South Africa or its solution—that would indeed be asking for trouble. It would moreover be outside the scope of the book.

A few preliminary words are, however, needed. The natives in the Union, mainly of Bantu stock, number over four and three quarter millions, and of these over half a million are resident in the urban areas. Taking into account the size of the Union, the number of the indigenous population is really insignificant. Indeed the sparseness of the inhabitants is very noticeable on long train journeys or motor drives, when for mile after mile no human being is seen.

It should be noted that no one in South Africa speaks of 'blacks' or 'niggers.' The indigenous races are spoken of as 'natives' or more generally 'Kaffirs'; while a native in domestic employment is spoken of as a 'boy' whatever his age.

In General Botha the Native population had a very real friend ; and, as I know from many conversations with him as well as from his own actions, he always took a broad and sympathetic view of questions affecting them. The natives themselves are quick to realise such an attitude and to value such sympathy ; and their grief at the General's death was universal and sincere.

During the period that I was in South Africa General Botha had not much opportunity of dealing with native questions, nor for much personal contact with them. He was, as Prime Minister, also Minister for Native affairs, but his multifarious and overwhelming duties during the War gave him little time to devote himself to native matters or to hold Indabas. But, nevertheless he took a constant personal interest in their doings and affairs.

He thought, and wisely, that while the War continued, it would be highly inexpedient to raise any big question of policy in connection with the natives. Such questions would necessarily give rise to discussion, almost certainly to controversy, with disturbing and unsettling effect on the native mind, and this just at a moment when tranquillity was of paramount importance.

In 1917, however, General Botha thought that he was bound by previous undertakings to introduce the Native Affairs Administration Bill, which dealt with the question of the " segregation " of the natives, the principle of which had been settled by the Act of 1913. The Bill however met with considerable opposition and was finally dropped.

General Botha was always keenly desirous that the Native question should not in any way become one on which the Dutch and the British sections of

the community would take, or be driven to take divergent views. He did his best by speech, action and influence to prevent any such result, which in his opinion would tend to accentuate racial feeling and be injurious to the welfare of the natives.

We often discussed together Native questions, in which, apart from the Governor Generalship, I was, hereditarily, and as High Commissioner greatly interested.

The main proposals which he had in mind, and with which I was entirely in accord, but which he did not think it advisable to attempt to deal with while war continued, were substantially carried out by General Smuts in 1920 and 1923.

These included the appointment of a Native Affairs Commission, the extension of the system of native Local Councils in native areas in order to give to the natives the management of their own local affairs, and the institution of Native Conferences to be convened from time to time on questions of policy affecting the natives. The urban natives also required consideration.

II

It undoubtedly came as a surprise to the Natives that any other Nation was sufficiently formidable to make war on the British Empire ; and at the outbreak of war there was, not unnaturally, some anxiety as to how far the natives would be affected in consequence of the position which had arisen. But throughout the War and during the Rebellion, the behaviour of the natives was excellent ; they were staunch in their loyalty, and there was never an anxious moment in regard to them either in the Union, Rhodesia, or the Protectorates.

On the Rand, at a time of industrial difficulty during the War, there was some unrest amongst the natives there employed. But this unrest was not without substantial justification, both in respect of the question of wages and in regard to the administration of the Law. The general attitude of the natives was not however affected.

It is true that the recruiting for the Native Labour non-combatant Corps for overseas was not altogether satisfactory either in the Union (with the exception of the Northern Transvaal) or in the Protectorates; and General Botha himself expressed to me his dissatisfaction that the natives did not recognise more fully, by joining the Corps, all that the Imperial Government and the Union Government had done for them in the past.

There were, however, one or two reasons for the somewhat meagre response. In the main the natives were afraid to trust themselves to the ships. More than one Chief said to me that he and his people could not understand how a ship could find her way at sea, as there were neither roads nor tracks, and spoor and guiding marks were immediately obliterated. They had heard also of the danger of submarines; and the unfortunate sinking of the 'Mendi,' which was accidentally sunk with a number of the Native Contingent on board, naturally increased their feeling of peril and dislike to embark on a ship. Then certain evil-minded persons did their best to alarm the natives, by putting about that the recruitment was an insidious attempt on the part of the Government to entice away the men so that their land could be seized in their absence.

One other practical reason was ingeniously given to me at Lusikisiki in the Transkei. The Chief at

the Indaba there, said to me that he and his people did not care about going to war in a country not known to them, and where they understood that there were no cattle. "We natives (said he) only go to war if we are told there will be an opportunity of capturing cattle."

Nevertheless the Native Contingent, though the recruiting was rather disappointing in the matter of numbers, did actually amount to some 30,000 in all, and did excellent work in the docks and behind the lines, in France.¹

In addition to the Native Labour Corps, many thousands of natives were employed during the War in one way and another, both in the German South West Campaign and in German East as waggon drivers, carriers, and in other capacities. Including those who went overseas, some seventy thousand natives from the Union assisted in the War and they gave very material help in various ways while their conduct throughout was most satisfactory.

¹ A white Officer, when a batch of natives landed at Portsmouth on their way to France, took some of them into a shop. The shopman said "These are Zulus I suppose." The Officer, somewhat hypercritically said, "No, Am-a-zulu." (Amazulu being the plural for Zulu). "Oh! really, are you?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE GERMAN EAST AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

I

GENERAL BOTHA had much to do with the initial stages, and with the preliminary plan of the German East campaign : and he had, as Prime Minister, full responsibility for raising the necessary troops, and especially the Burgher Brigades. He took a warm interest in the Expedition, and during the campaign he paid a short visit to the front at the request of General Smuts. But he had no personal responsibility for the actual campaign itself, while the burden of organisation and equipment, the provision of horses and transport fell to the Defence Department.

The first Campaign against German East Africa in 1914-15, in which the Union had no share, was unsuccessful and somewhat disastrous. Subsequently, for many months the British, mainly Indian, troops, remained on the defensive ; and it was not until the autumn of 1915 that the Imperial Government came to the conclusion that a serious effort must be made to occupy the country—the only remaining Colony still in the hands of the Germans.

The Union Government had already, in August of that year, informed the Imperial Government that, in addition to providing the First South African Infantry Brigade for service oversea, they

hoped it would be possible before long for His Majesty's Government to utilise the military resources of the Union in other directions on the African Continent. At the end of the month they stated that, apart from the drafts necessary to keep up the First Brigade in Europe, the Union Government would be prepared to recruit men for a Second Brigade, which could be utilised for service in East Africa or elsewhere. In their view the Union troops were more fitted by their training and general experience in fighting, accentuated by their recent campaign in German South West, for operations in German East than in Europe; while mounted Brigades would be available for German East who could not be utilised overseas. Steps were immediately taken to bring the Brigade into being.

At the end of October the Imperial Government stated that they considered the position in East Africa very serious, and requested the Union Government to inform them approximately the size of the Force which could be raised in South Africa for an Expeditionary Force, and how soon it would be available. The Union Government replied that "they were prepared to send an Expeditionary Force to East Africa of the strength and composition which they understand is required adequately to supplement the forces already there."

Indeed, I think, at that time the Union Government would have been prepared not only to undertake the major part of the operations, but, if desired, to undertake the campaign entirely on their own account as had been the case in regard to German South West. But there were other interests involved as well as those of the Union, and no such proposition was made.

The Expedition to German East was not unpopular and the various Regiments, Infantry and Mounted, were composed of men drawn from both races.¹ The recruiting for the Second Infantry Brigade and for two mounted Burgher Brigades that were to accompany them, was so satisfactory that the Union Government found themselves able to form a Third Infantry Brigade, together with additional Mounted Regiments for service in East Africa.

The great experiment of the Campaign was the use of mounted troops in a country of the nature of German East. Though the mortality among the horses was unfortunately terrible, their use, especially in the earlier stages of the operation, was fully justified, and rendered possible the first rapid push into the interior that was made before the rains began.

The first part of the Expedition was despatched in January 1916. The total force sent to East and to Central Africa in connection with the German East Campaign, finally numbered 48,500 men. There were ten Infantry Battalions and ten Mounted Regiments, a Signal Company, Medical, Veterinary and other Units. There were besides two Cape Corps (coloured) and two Indian Bearer Corps, as well as coloured and natives in a non-combatant capacity to the number of some twelve to fourteen thousand.

The Union Government, having undertaken a very material responsibility in connection with the Campaign against German East Africa, were

¹ Botha told me (January 6th, 1916), that as far as he could estimate, of the troops then raised for the Campaign, twenty-five per cent. of the Burgher Brigades were 'British' and twenty-five per cent. of the Infantry Regiments were 'Dutch.'

naturally anxious as to the Command, and the plans and prospects of the Campaign.

At the end of October 1915 the Imperial Government had sounded the Union Government as to whether General Smuts would undertake the command. But the Prime Minister and General Smuts, and I agreed with their view, considered that he could not be spared from the Union, and the offer was declined.

At the end of November, I received a telegram from the Secretary of State for my information and that of the Union Government, telling me that General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien had been appointed to the command. I at once informed the Prime Minister. "I am delighted," said he, "my anxieties are at rest. He is a good man. We always thought he was one of your ablest Generals in the War. I had a great respect for him. We had much to do with each other, and were for a considerable time actively pitted against one another."

About the same time General Northey was appointed to command the Central Force operating from Rhodesia and Nyassaland, to which also the Union were contributing a Contingent. Early in January 1916, General Northey came round by the Cape and Pretoria for consultation, and we were much struck by his personal and military qualities which he subsequently displayed in a marked degree throughout the Campaign.

The War Office thought it advisable also that General Smith-Dorrien, on taking up his command, should come viâ the Cape with his Staff to meet Botha, Smuts, and myself, in order to ascertain personally the help that the Union would be able to give, and to consider with us the plan of campaign.

Sir Horace arrived with his Staff at Capetown on January 12th, 1916. Most unfortunately, however, on the way out he had fallen seriously ill, and was unable to come up to Pretoria, where the Ministers and myself were at the time. General Simpson-Baikie, his Chief of the Staff and other members of the Staff, came, however, to Pretoria to consult over the whole position. To us it seemed essential that a forward movement should be made at once before the rainy season began, instead, as was first proposed by the War Office, of waiting until after the rains were over. To this the War Office finally agreed; and we also obtained General Smith-Dorrien's assent to the plan of Campaign that we had mapped out for his consideration, with such meagre information as was at our disposal.

II

General Smith-Dorrien's health did not materially improve; and, finally, on January 31st, to his very great disappointment, fully reciprocated in South Africa, he felt himself obliged to relinquish the Command, and left Capetown for England shortly afterwards. Thereupon, the Imperial Government again offered the command to General Smuts. Under the circumstances, and now that the Union had committed themselves to a very considerable share in, and responsibility for the campaign against German East, the offer was accepted, and General Smuts left for East Africa a few days later to take up the command, with the rank of Lieutenant General in the British Army.

Unfortunately precious time had been unavoidably lost, and but a few weeks were left before the rainy season in which to carry out the first part

of the operations that had been planned. As bad luck would have it, the rainy season of 1916 not only began earlier than usual, but was especially torrential, to the great detriment of the operations, and to the aggravation of hardships and sickness for the men.

When the new Commander-in-Chief arrived in the country, in February 1916, the situation was a grave one. The German forces were entrenched in British Territory at Taveta and elsewhere, and were threatening the main railway communication of British East Africa with the sea and Mombasa itself. Just before General Smuts arrived, and in anticipation of his arrival, the Officer in Command of the British forces had made a frontal attack on Salaita Hill, which had been repulsed with considerable loss.

Though the precious weeks before the rainy season could not be recalled, General Smuts determined to attack at once. On March 8th an advance was made, the enemy entrenched at Salaita Hill were outflanked, and on the 9th Taveta was captured. After a fortnight of hard fighting and stiff marching in soaking rain, through dense forests and over difficult mountains, the Germans were completely driven out of British Territory, and the whole of the Kilimanjaro district was in our occupation.

In April an expedition of mounted men under General van Deventer was launched from Moschi two hundred miles into the interior, to Kondoa Irangi; the Infantry foot-slogging after them in support.

A further advance took place, but the rainy season began prematurely and with exceptional violence, rendering the country impassable. Further

immediate operations were rendered impossible, and the army in the interior was cut off from its base, and suffered much from sickness and shortage of food and of kit. But even the few weeks of active operations had redressed the balance, the British Colony was no longer on the defensive, and the enemy's railway and strategic front was threatened.

Meanwhile the line of military railway from Voi to Moschi on the other side of the border, the construction of which had been begun earlier in the year but had been stopped by the German advance, was rapidly and roughly constructed; thus providing an invaluable fifty miles of railway transport for men, munitions and commissariat.

As soon as the rainy season was over the advance was continued over very inaccessible country, and gradually, assisted by a Belgian force, the whole of the Northern part of the country, together with the railway that runs from Dar-es-Salaam (occupied on September 4th) due west to Tabora (occupied by the Belgians on September 19th) fell into our hands. Later on in the year the district down to the Rufiji river, some way north of the Portuguese border, was cleared of the enemy and occupied.

Native levies in large numbers were recruited to relieve the white troops, and to help to carry on the campaign against the Germans whose main forces consisted of native Askaris. By October 1916 it had become possible to evacuate and send home some twelve to fifteen thousand of the South African troops.¹

¹ See Speech of General Smuts in his reply to an Address of Welcome on his return from German East, presented to him by the Mayor, Council and Citizens of Cape Town, February 12th, 1917, which gives a graphic account of the Campaign.

In July 1916, General Smuts asked General Botha to pay a visit to German East as he wanted to see him on personal grounds, and also desired to consult with him in regard to the further and difficult operations then contemplated. The General was away rather over a month.

In February 1917 the Imperial Government, as already stated, were anxious that the Prime Minister of the Union should come to England to attend the Imperial War Conference. It was not possible for General Botha to leave the Union at that time, and as the main part of the operations in German East was practically over, the Cabinet proposed that General Smuts should take the Prime Minister's place, as the Union representative. To this the Imperial Government assented, and Smuts relinquished his command and went at once to England.

III

General Hoskins succeeded General Smuts as G.O.C. ; but a month or two later he was appointed to a command elsewhere, and the War Office offered the command in German East to Brigadier General J. van Deventer who was in charge of the Mounted Brigades and who had greatly distinguished himself during the Campaign.¹

In 1916 General Smuts, who then held the Portfolio of Defence, had approached the War Office with a suggestion that Generals van Deventer and Coen Brits, both then engaged in the German East Campaign, should be made Brigadier Generals in the British Army. General Smuts, in making his recommendation first emphasised the

¹ Major General Sir Jan van Deventer, K.C.B. He was born in 1874, in the Free State, and died in 1922.

distinguished services these two soldiers had rendered to their Republics in the South African War, and then detailed their services during the Rebellion in 1914 and in the German South West Campaign in 1915. The War Office at once acceded to the request, and they were both gazetted as Brigadier-Generals in the British Army.

The problems with which the new Commander-in-Chief was confronted were of a formidable nature ; but as he remarked when he took over the command, " it was a difficult task, but it was a pleasure to tackle a difficult task ! "

During the earlier stages of the Campaign the enemy had a large regular force in the field, who could be located and fought. There were definite objectives, certain lines of railway, certain towns and ports to be captured and occupied. But when this part of the campaign was concluded and the Northern districts of the Country down to the railway were in the occupation of the British and Belgian forces, the further advance had to be made through a less accessible and more unhealthy district, away from railways, bridges, and roads : and the difficulties of transport and of bringing the enemy to action were enormously increased.

The campaign, indeed, gradually developed into a sort of guerilla fighting of the most disheartening character. The enemy, a compact and mobile force with trained and disciplined Askaris, were well armed with rifles and maxims, had large numbers of carriers, and were commanded by a man of resource and astuteness, operating in a district which he and his men knew well. In such a country and with such an enemy, the difficulty of outflanking or rounding up was well nigh insuperable.

But in November 1917 Von Lettow's principal Officer was captured with a considerable number of men. By the beginning of 1918 the whole of German East was in our possession, and von Lettow had been driven with his remaining forces over the border into Portuguese Territory, exhausted and demoralised and very short of arms, ammunition, and commissariat.

General van Deventer with the assent of the Portuguese Government, assumed the command of the operations in Portuguese Territory as well. But naturally his position was a delicate one, while the field of operations was even less inviting than before. Von Lettow managed moreover to re-equip and re-arm himself with munitions and equipment that he captured locally, and he was able to lay his hands on transport and carriers; thus invigorated, he was in a position to put up a formidable and prolonged defence.

Nevertheless, the British forces, largely consisting now of native levies, continued unceasingly to pursue and harry what were left of the German forces, until, at last, Von Lettow doubled back over the border into Northern Rhodesia with a small and faithful band of Whites and Askaris, numbering about four hundred. Hard pressed, he just managed to evade capture until the Armistice of November 1918 was declared, when he laid down his arms.

Colonel Von Lettow, who showed throughout ability and gallantry and fought like a gentleman, thus "carried his bat." On his surrender General van Deventer accorded to him all the honours of war, returned him his sword and permitted the forces with him the privilege of marching in to surrender with bayonets fixed and flags flying.

The German East Campaign had to be fought under conditions of great hardship and widespread disabling sickness. General Botha's visit to the front in July and August 1916, had made him fully aware of these conditions; and, on his return, he gave me a graphic description of them as they then were—and later they became even worse. The enemy, he said, had been the least of the difficulties with which the Union Forces had had to contend. Railways and roads had soon been left behind; and it was a terrible country to negotiate—thick bush, impenetrable jungle, high grass, even wild beasts,¹ impeded progress. It was a net-work of rivers without bridges, and when the rainy season began the rivers overflowed their banks, the bridges that had been constructed were washed away, and the country became one vast swamp. Transport and commissariat, food and water difficulties were enormous, and the men had to subsist on the scantiest of rations.

The actual casualties were, comparatively speaking, the least part of the sacrifice. The worst enemy of all was the virulent, devastating and recurrent attacks of malaria from which very few escaped. The good temper and grit with which the discomforts and sufferings were borne by Officers and men won General Botha's unbounded admiration.

¹ When visiting a Hospital in Durban, I came across a patient from German East, who the doctors told me had been badly crushed. I asked him what had happened. "Your Excellency, I fell into a nest of Rhinoceros."

CHAPTER XV

FIRST SOUTH AFRICAN BRIGADE "THE OVERSEA CONTINGENT"

PART I

FORMATION OF THE BRIGADE

THERE is no occasion to describe in any detail the exploits and achievements of the First South African Brigade, commonly spoken of in South Africa as the 'Oversea Contingent,' or familiarly as the 'Springboks'—are they not written in the Book of Buchan ?¹

General Botha's connection with the first Brigade was not very close, and he had of course no voice, as had been the case in German South West, and in a lesser degree in German East, in deciding where the Union Troops should be sent, or the actual part they should play in the campaign. But from the beginning he was anxious that, as far as their resources would allow, the Union should take a part in the European as well as in the African theatre of War, and he did his best throughout to keep the Brigade up to strength. He watched the doings of

¹ The *History of the South African Forces in France*, by John Buchan.

the Brigade with the keenest interest, and their exploits with intense pride.

As far as the Oversea Contingent was concerned General Botha, as we have seen, was, by the irony of fate, mainly disturbed and harassed by the political and parliamentary difficulties which arose over the question of their Pay. But the differences that arose over that question had nothing to do with the Brigade itself; and there were no two opinions in the Union as to the splendid services they rendered in France.

The Union Government before it was in a position to consider the question of sending men to Europe had first to dispose of the Rebellion and then to carry to a conclusion the German South West Campaign. The Oversea Brigade did not therefore come into existence until after a year of war.

The question of sending a Contingent oversea was first discussed by the Union Government unofficially with the Imperial Government in April 1915, by which time it was already becoming clear that the number of troops in German South West could before long be materially reduced; and it was thought that many of the men in the field would desire to volunteer for service in Europe. The Imperial Government very gladly welcomed an Oversea Contingent.

The matter, however, remained in abeyance for a time as General Botha, who was in German South West in command of the campaign, deprecated any definite arrangement being made until he could see his way clearer in German South West. He wished, he said, "the question kept open as it was too early to form a judgment, and, moreover, probably by

delay the offer of troops might be made more acceptable."

By the end of June 1915 the conclusion of the German South West Campaign was in sight, and arrangements were made for the evacuation of a considerable number of the troops. Ministers therefore informed the Imperial Government that they were anxious to render whatever assistance was in their power in prosecuting the War in Europe or elsewhere to a successful conclusion. They offered to call at once for volunteers to form a full Infantry Brigade for Oversea Service with batteries of Field Artillery and an Aviation Corps, together with smaller units in connection with Field Companies of Engineers, Signal Corps, Field Hospital, Ambulance and Medical Units. His Majesty's Government expressed their gratitude to Ministers for their offer.

By the beginning of August, the Union Government were able to inform the Home Government that arrangements were being made to raise and to send to Europe an Infantry Brigade, together with other Units, and that they hoped to be able to supply the necessary monthly reinforcements.

The unit number of a Brigade for Europe was normally 4,000 men, and the original idea of the Union Government, before the heavy liabilities involved for a single Brigade were fully realised, was to send two Infantry Brigades. It subsequently appeared however that a Brigade involved not only the supply of the original 4,000 men; but, according to the War Office requirements, would also within a period of twelve months necessitate reinforcements to the extent of another eight or nine

thousand men to provide for wastage.¹ It was clear therefore that the provision of two Brigades was beyond the capacity of the Union.

Five Batteries of Heavy Artillery drawn from the Brigade in South Africa, and consisting of guns lent by the British Government or provided by the Admiralty from Simonstown, with a total personnel of 600 men, were also sent overseas.

And while providing a First Infantry Brigade for service in Europe, the Union Government at the same time expressed a hope that it might be possible for His Majesty's Government to utilize the military resources of the Union in German East.

The Oversea Contingent consisted of four Battalions, constituted as follows. The 1st South African Infantry, drawn from the Cape Province (Col. Dawson); the 2nd S.A.I. represented Natal and the Orange Free State (Col. Tanner); the 3rd S.A.I. were the Transvaal and Rhodesian Regiments (Col. Thackeray); the 4th S.A.I. was a South African Scottish Regiment (Col. F. A. Jones). Brigadier

¹ The War Office requirements for a Brigade were as follows:—

Brigade and Depôt	4,400
10% additional to go with Force	400
	<hr/>
	4,800
20% reinforcements to be recruited at outset	800
	<hr/>
	5,600
15% reinforcements per month to end of current year, say	3,000
	<hr/>
	8,600
Ditto to end calendar year, say additional	4,200
	<hr/>
	12,800
	<hr/>

General Henry Lukin was in command of the Brigade.

About a third of the Brigade had had some previous military training or experience. There was, of course, no commandeering in connection with the Force.

PART II

THE BRIGADE IN BEING

I

THE First Infantry Brigade with a total strength of 5,800, left South Africa in August 1915 and went first to England for training. They embarked for Egypt at the end of December 1915 ; did good work there and had some fighting.

The Brigade left Alexandria in the month of April 1916, and on landing in France entrained for Flanders. They were attached to the Ninth Division then under the command of General Furse. After a period of training and initiation into the methods of trench warfare, they had their baptism of fire and won their spurs at the Battle of the Somme in the beginning of July. In this first week of fighting they suffered between five and six hundred casualties. Immediately following came first the attack on, and then the defence of Delville Wood, which will live in the memory of South Africans as their most glorious feat of arms.

The first attack took place on July 15th, and the battle continued with varying fortunes, attack and counter attack, for six days and five nights. Without reinforcements or relief, the Officer Commanding carried out his Divisional Commander's instructions, "that at all costs the Wood must be held."

The honour and glory was great, but the cost was

terrific.¹ Before the attack on Delville Wood the Brigade mustered 121 Officers and 3,032 men; the remnant which ultimately re-assembled in "Happy Valley"—incongruous term—numbered but 750. In their first fortnight of fighting the casualties amounted to 2,815

After Delville Wood the Brigade was reinforced with drafts from Bordon to the extent of some 2,900 men. In August they were again in the fighting line; and the beginning of October (1916) found them taking part in a fresh advance; and in the ten days' fighting that ensued, they lost 1,150 men. A little later General Lukin was promoted to the command of the 9th Division, and Lt. Colonel Dawson² took his place.

The winter months were passed in the usual trench warfare. At the beginning of April of 1917 came the great advance on Arras, in which the Brigade took part, coming out of the fighting with some 1,400 casualties, but with a greater number of prisoners.

The Third Battle of Ypres in September and October was their next exploit. November and December found them fighting again; and, by January 1918, in spite of drafts, the strength of the Brigade had shrunk to under 1,800 Officers and men.

Reinforcements arrived, and on March 21st, 1918, at Gauche Wood, the Brigade had to face the first fury of the German onslaught. The next great landmark in their confused and heroic annals is Marrières Wood, near Bouchavesnes. Here after

¹ See Mr. Buchan's graphic and appreciative account of the battle of Delville Wood (Chapter III.)

² Lt. General F. S. Dawson, C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C., died 1919.

three days of incessant fighting, they were ordered at dawn on March 24th to make a stand. Their casualties had already amounted to two-thirds of their original strength, and they now mustered hardly more than 500 men, exhausted by want of sleep, scanty rations and a score of fights. All that morning the repeated German attacks gradually pressed back the Divisions on either side of the Brigade, leaving them entirely in the air. The orders to the South Africans were as before, "to hold on at all costs"—and again they were obeyed. The enemy in overwhelming and ever-reinforced numbers worked round their flank and rear, and the position held was increasingly exposed to shell and rifle fire. The extreme need of men from increasing casualties was so great that all the wounded who could possibly hold a rifle were stopped on their way to the dressing station and sent back—not one of them but willingly returned. But even worse, the ammunition began to give out and the men were forced to conserve their fire. By the early afternoon every machine gun and Lewis gun was out of action, and within a short time the remaining hundred unwounded men in the front line had not a cartridge left amongst them. The Brigade was now completely isolated and surrounded, and at 4.15 when the final German assault was launched against a handful of unarmed men, surrender was the only course remaining.

The bald news that the South African Brigade and their Commanding Officer had surrendered, came as a very unpleasant shock to South Africa, and was received almost with incredulity. It was not till later that South Africa realised that the stand at Marrières was as fine as the defence of Delville

Wood, and that the Brigade had added to, not diminished, its lustre on that day.

"It was," as their historian states, "no piece of fruitless gallantry. Dawson, as he was tramping eastwards, saw a sight which told him that his decision had been right, and that his work had not been in vain. The whole road for miles east of Bouchavesnes was blocked by a continuous double line of transport and guns, which proved that the South Africans had for over seven hours held up not only a mass of German infantry, but all the artillery and transport advancing on the Bouchavesnes-Combles highway. Indeed, it is not too much to say that on that fevered Sabbath the stand of the Brigade saved the British front. It was the hour of von der Marwitz's most deadly thrust. While Gough was struggling at the river crossings, the Third Army had been forced west of Morval and Bapaume, far over our old battleground of the Somme. The breach between the two armies was hourly widening. But for the self-sacrifice of the Brigade at Marrières Wood and the delay in the German advance at its most critical point, it is doubtful whether Byng could ever have established that line on which, before the end of March, he held the enemy."

General Botha in winding up the debate on the Address to Sir Douglas Haig and the British Army in the House of Assembly on March 28th, 1918, spoke with warm pride of the action of the Oversea Contingent. "The bravery displayed by those men was grand—it was a bravery which was even greater than that displayed in the immortal Delville Wood battle. Those men who have stood there and have fallen there have done honour to

our name, they have upheld our reputation, they have shown that South Africa produces sons of whom the world may justly be proud."

For the moment the Brigade had ceased to be. But it was soon re-organised and General Tanner, O.C. of the Second Regiment, who had been transferred to another command, came back as Brigadier of some 1,500 men.

The Brigade was left no breathing space. On April 13th, at Messines, they took a vital part in the Battle of the Lys; and, again fighting with their flank turned, by their tenacity held up the enemy long enough to allow reserves to come up from the south. Their casualty list amounted to nearly half their remaining strength; and, in spite of drafts, their numbers were now so few that they were merged as a Battalion into a Composite Brigade, which General Tanner commanded. By September (the Composite Battalion having meanwhile been more than once in action), they received sufficient reinforcements to enable the South African Brigade to be again re-formed.

The last achievement of the Brigade was to take a part, in October 1918, in the forcing of the Selle River and the capture of the Railway embankment near Le Cateau, a position which the enemy thought impregnable. In this twelve days' battle the South Africans took a prominent part, and captured 1,300 prisoners, 22 field guns and 367 machine guns, at a cost to themselves of 1,250 casualties. On November 11th came the Armistice.

The number of men who went overseas for duty in France in connection with the South African Contingents was 31,500.¹ The total casualties of the

¹ Of the total number of men who joined the Brigade, "about 15 per cent. of the original Brigade was Dutch, and the proportion

First South African Brigade in France were close on fifteen thousand, nearly three hundred per cent. of the original strength. About five thousand of the men of the Brigade were killed or died of wounds, more than double the total aggregate of the other campaigns—the Rebellion, German South West and German East.

The Oversea Brigade, as we have seen, did not begin to come into existence until about July 1915, and meanwhile a very large number of South Africans anxious to play their part in Europe went to England on their own account, and joined individual Units of the British Army. In the later stages of the War, a large number of young men, Dutch and British, were recruited for service in the Air Force, where they did particularly gallant and efficient service.

The total number of South Africans, apart from those serving in South African Contingents, who joined Imperial units in England was 12,400. It is on record, that either as Officers or serving in the ranks, men from South Africa joined at least a hundred and fifty different Units of the Imperial troops, mostly Infantry Regiments. There is no return of their total casualties, but nearly 1,500 are known to have been killed or died.

II

The South African Brigade, though never more than a handful compared with the millions engaged, rose to something like 30 per cent. before the end of the Campaign." Buchan page 15.

One of the Dutch South Africans in Hospital suffering from a bullet wound was X-rayed. This showed that there was another bullet besides the German bullet embedded in him. Asked about it, he said cheerfully "Oh, that was one I got from the Tommies in the Boer War."

was throughout its existence in the thick of the fighting, and twice enjoyed the singular good fortune that its sacrifice had meant the salvation of the British Army.¹

Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in his farewell order to the South African Brigade said :—

“ The South African troops carry home with them a great reputation, and the high regard and affection of all who fought by their side. The record of their service runs through all the great battles of the past three years, and in all they have borne themselves with the utmost courage and devotion. At Delville Wood in 1916, in the great attack east of Arras, and the heroic fighting for the ridge east of Ypres in 1917, in withstanding the terrific German attacks on the Somme and on the Lys in the spring of 1918, they covered themselves with undying glory.

“ Despite the tremendous strain of the earlier battles of 1918, they took a leading part in our victorious advance in Flanders later in that year. They have deserved well of their own great land and of the mighty Empire of which it forms part. I thank them all, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, for the noble service they have done under my command. I wish them a safe and happy home-coming and all prosperity.”

Many instances came to my notice of the very good reputation which the South African Contingent acquired in Europe. One amongst many especially pleased me. In a letter written from England shown me by a friend, not written with any idea that I should see it, the writer casually remarked, “ We’ve been seeing a good deal of the South Africans, and

¹ Buchan, p. 214.

have had some of them to stay. They are the sort of fellows one likes to ask again."

Of the Brigade itself the historian of the Egyptian Campaign noted that "a Brigade of South Africans was in Egypt for a time. They became extremely popular with all the troops, for they did their job very cleanly and thoroughly. They had no wish to talk about it after it was done." Colonel Drummond Hay, commanding the Coldstream Guards, expressed to Mr. W. P. Schreiner, High Commissioner in London, "our deep sense of the indebtedness the Regiment is in to you for your kind services in recommending so many good men to my notice. Without exception the men you have sent me have turned out first class, steady, reliable, gallant Officers and gentlemen, who make delightful brother Officers and who can be trusted to behave themselves when on leave. You will be glad to know that from all Battalions I am asked to send more South Africans of the same type."¹

It may truly be said that the South African wherever he went, left behind him not only a record for gallant fighting, but of good-fellowship, modesty, and geniality.

¹ November 9th, 1916.

CHAPTER XVI

THE UNION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR

CAMPAIGNS, FORCES ENGAGED, CASUALTIES—CON- TRIBUTION OF COLOURED COMMUNITY

I

IN previous chapters we have seen that the Union, besides suppressing the armed Revolt within its own borders, solely undertook, carried out and brought to a completion the German South West Campaign; constituted the principal factor in the conquest of German East (as well as providing two Commanders-in-Chief); maintained an Oversea Brigade in Europe, and contributed many thousands of men to other Imperial Units.¹

It is estimated that the number of men drawn from the two white races in the Union who, apart from those engaged in garrison duties, took part in these various operations amounted to about a hundred and fifty thousand.

In addition to the European contribution, the Coloured Community and the Natives contributed a

¹ The particulars given are for the purposes of this Book confined to the Union. But I should like to take this opportunity of noting the splendid contribution made by the manhood of Rhodesia to the Empire in its time of need. The percentage of available men who went from Rhodesia and served in various quarters of the Globe, was, I believe higher than from any other part of the Empire. The natives of Rhodesia also gave of their best in various ways.

large number of men, who in the various capacities in which they were engaged rendered excellent service.¹

Many of the men, of course, served in more than one Campaign—some in no less than four, including the Rebellion,—so that it is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the actual number of individuals who took the field. But in any case the contribution was large and indeed remarkable, when the total of the white population and the peculiar conditions that prevailed in the Union are taken into account.

During the period of the War the total white population did not exceed 1,400,000.² These figures moreover require to be qualified, for it is of course notorious that a considerable proportion of the Dutch-speaking population of the Union were actively hostile to the Union becoming involved in the War. Many thousands actually came out in Rebellion, while others, loyal enough and prepared to defend their Country in case of attack, were indisposed to assist in a campaign against the Germans. On the other hand, a large proportion of the Dutch-speaking section bore their full share in all these Campaigns as well as in the suppression of the Rebellion. Both 'British' and 'Dutch' were found in every Regiment; and a large number of those who thus fought side by side had fought on opposite sides in the South African War.³

Fortunately for South Africa the casualties in

¹ See p. 289, and p. 319.

² The Census of 1911 gave 1,276,000, that of 1918 1,450,000, as the total White population in the Union.

³ See List of Union Forces who took part in the War at end of this Chapter.

the two main Campaigns in which its men were engaged were not severe; the heavy losses were confined to the Oversea Contingent. The total official casualties amounted to rather over seven thousand killed or died of wounds or of sickness, and over twelve thousand wounded.¹

And apart from the actual deaths or casualties it should be noted that practically the whole Force which served in German East suffered from malaria at one time or another, and many from black water fever. A large proportion of the men suffered so severely that they had to be invalided home, and a considerable number of these were under treatment in hospitals for months or even years. Thus many men who would otherwise have re-enlisted for service overseas, were incapacitated.

The total expenditure incurred by the Union in respect of the War in connection with the Rebellion, the German South West and German East Campaigns, and the Oversea Contingent, amounted roughly to about £30,000,000. Against this could be put some valuable assets due to the acquisition under Mandate of the South West Territory—twelve hundred miles of railway, public buildings, a large interest in the diamond output, and the like.

One further point may perhaps be mentioned. In addition to liberal contributions given to various

¹ *Rebellion* Killed or Died of Wounds 132, wounded 242. *German West* 114 and 318. *German East* 539 and 1,269. *Overseas* 3,908 and 10,399. *Died of Sickness or Disease*, total 2,340.

The casualties of the Central East Africa Contingent were about 220 killed or died and about 120 wounded.

There is no return available of the total casualties among the 12,400 men who joined Imperial Units, but it is known over 1,400 were killed or died.

War Funds locally, or sent to England, a sum of about three and a quarter millions was subscribed to the "Governor General's Fund" of which I was Chairman. This Fund (apart from the Defence Department arrangements, or the provision made by the men themselves) assisted the dependents of the men who were on service, made additional provision for the widows and for the invalided men themselves, especially in cases of blindness, and provided for the education of the children of widows, etc.

South Africa was greatly fortunate in as much as it was altogether outside the sphere of "devastated areas," and was spared the destruction and brutalities of the War. Its people were not subjected to the nervous strain of air raids, of sudden or continuous "bad news" at their very doors, and of the mental and physical effect of prolonged rationing.¹ Indeed the citizens, female and male, of the Union never had brought home to them, nor were in a position to realise the actual conditions under which the War was being waged in Europe.

The German South West and the German East Campaigns were, except in South Africa, but little in the public eye, and may have been looked upon merely as 'side-shows' of the Great War. But side-shows are very often useful and lucrative, and of material assistance to the main object.

¹ There were in the Union throughout the War, more foodstuffs of different sorts—meat, mealies, etc.—available for transport to Europe than there was freightage to carry them, so that rationing was unnecessary there, and would have been of no assistance elsewhere.

Undoubtedly the position, when the final terms of Peace came to be considered, would have been somewhat different if the two important German Colonies of German South West and German East had been still, wholly or partly, in the hands of Germany. To attack and conquer German Territory during the War was one thing ; to insist upon its relinquishment, unconquered, after the War, would have been quite another matter, and the German claim to retention would have been much less easy to resist. To the Germans these Colonies would have been very useful pawns in the Peace game.

But, in any case, whether it were in the side shows or in the main operations in Europe, South Africa manfully played her part in the Great War.

THE "CAPE CORPS"

THE Coloured Community of the Cape Province took their share, and a very useful share in the operations of the War. In various combative, as well as non-combative capacities, such as mule drivers and the like, they rendered most effective service in German South West, in German East and Overseas.

The total number of Cape Coloured men recruited in South Africa for service during the War numbered some 30,000; and these men were selected for enlistment out of a very much larger number of applicants.

In August 1915 a suggestion was made that a Cape Coloured (Combatant) Battalion should be recruited for East Africa. This was done, and the "Cape Corps" as they were named, went to East Africa. There were two battalions the 1st and 2nd Cape Corps. The 1st Battalion served in East Africa in 1916-1917, and in Palestine and Egypt in 1918-1919, and the 2nd Battalion served in East Africa in 1917. The commissioned Officers were Europeans, but after the first few months the warrant officers, with one or two exceptions, and all the N.C.O.'s were coloured men.

The Cape Corps earned an excellent reputation for discipline and fighting qualities, and specially distinguished itself in Lord Allenby's final advance in Palestine in 1918, and were commended by him for their fighting qualities and good conduct.

The Cape Coloured Labour Regiment and the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport which were recruited as labour regiments, did very good service in France. There were also coloured drivers with the batteries of South African Field Artillery which served in East Africa and in Palestine.

The total number of the men of the Cape Corps who went to German East was 4,123, and Overseas 2,280. Throughout the men showed gallantry, discipline, and grit.

The Cape Corps were quartered for training purposes at Simonstown, and I remember that the first time I went to inspect them soon after their formation, accompanied by General Thompson (the then G.O.C.) he was much impressed, as I was, with the smartness of the men and with the way in which they carried out their drill and evolutions. The white Officers told me that their difficulty was not to get the men to drill and to take an interest in what they were doing, the difficulty was to prevent them from over-doing it. So soon as their Officers and N.C.O.'s had dismissed them, the men were so keen on their job that they drilled one another.

NOTE ON THE UNION FORCES WHICH TOOK PART IN THE WAR

(a)

A VERY impressive Memorial Service was held in Cape Town on May 16th, 1919, and on the Service paper was printed the names of all the Union Units which took part in the Union operations. They were as follows:—

PERMANENT FIELD ARTILLERY

S.A. MOUNTED RIFLEMEN

HEAVY ARTILLERY

S.A. ENGINEERS

CITIZEN FORCE : MOUNTED AND DISMOUNTED RIFLEMEN

Independent Border Rifles ; Southern Rifles ; Midland Rifles ; Bechuanaland Rifles ; Karroo Schutters ; Natal Carbineers ; Natal Mounted Rifles ; Umvoti Mounted Rifles ; Imperial Light Horse ; Midland Horse ; Western Province Mounted Rifles ; Griqualand West Rifles ; Graaff Reinet Ruiters.

TEMPORARY MOUNTED RIFLEMEN

Western Transvaal Rifles ; Northern Transvaal Rifles ; Botha's Hoogeveld Ruiters ; Enslin's Horse ; Hartigan's Horse ; Natal Light Horse.

S.A. HORSE

Ten Regiments.

MOUNTED BURGHERS

Seventy-two Commandos.

CITIZEN FORCE : INFANTRY

Durban Light Infantry ; Eastern Rifles ; Kaffrarian Rifles ; Capetown Highlanders ; Kimberley Regiment ; Transvaal Scottish ; Witwatersrand Rifles ; Rand Light Infantry ; Pretoria Regiment.

S.A. INFANTRY

Twelve Regiments.

S.A. RIFLES

RAILWAY REGIMENT

TEMPORARY INFANTRY REGIMENTS

S.A. Irish ; Rand Rifles

MACHINE GUN SECTIONS

AVIATION CORPS

CAPE CORPS (COLOURED)

S.A. SERVICE CORPS

S.A. MEDICAL CORPS

S.A. MEDICAL MILITARY NURSING SERVICE

S.A. VETERINARY CORPS

S.A. CHAPLAINS

S.A. FIELD TELEGRAPH AND POSTAL CORPS

CAPE AUXILIARY HORSE TRANSPORT COMPANIES

CAPE COLOURED LABOUR BATTALIONS

NATIVE LABOUR CORPS.

(b)

On another page were printed the names (as far as they could be ascertained) of the Units of His Majesty's Forces, Naval and Military in which Union men, or men connected with the Union, served during the War.

These numbered 149; and included H.M. NAVY and NAVAL RESERVES; CAVALRY; AIR FORCE; ARTILLERY; TANK CORPS; BRIGADE OF GUARDS; INFANTRY REGIMENTS; YEOMANRY; ARMY SERVICE CORPS; ORDNANCE CORPS; MEDICAL CORPS; VETERINARY CORPS; ARMY CHAPLAINS; NURSING SERVICE; RED CROSS, etc.

To these must be added the MERCANTILE MARINE, the INDIAN ARMY, and the ARMIES of the ALLIES.

CHAPTER XVII

THE END

PART I

FAILING HEALTH

GENERAL BOTHA'S health began to fail about the middle of 1917. The Session which opened in February of that year was long, anxious and worrying, and told heavily upon him. During the course of the Autumn¹ and Winter of 1916 Mrs. Botha's health gave very grave cause for anxiety, which greatly told upon him. Her health however, gradually improved after the turn of the year.

In writing to the Secretary of State at the end of June 1917 I noted that Botha admitted that he was not well ; was washed out, was sleeping badly and required a rest. " I am somewhat anxious (I said) about his health. The pressure on him for the last three years has been enormous and exceptionally trying ; and the wonder is that he has not knocked up badly before. The German South West campaign was a God-send. It did him a world of good being on service in the open. . . . Botha told me (I added) that it disturbed him that Mrs. Botha, who on each occasion when the question arose, had been throughout the strongest against his resigning, now wrote to urge him to do so, as she feared that he would otherwise break down. He thought that

¹ Spring and Summer in South Africa.

she was unduly alarmed at the political position, and had only appreciated it at its worst, while things were now greatly improved in that respect."

After the Session of 1917 was over, his colleagues were anxious that the General should have a real holiday, and that he should in addition be relieved of as much administrative work as possible. A public notice was issued to the effect that the Prime Minister was ordered two months' rest. He went to Warmbaths to take the waters; but he only stayed there a fortnight, as members of what George Russell used to call "the great Norman family of the De Trops," came to the place by the dozen to see him, rendering it impossible for him to obtain any real rest or benefit from the baths.

On the 20th August on my way from Durban to Bechuanaland I saw the Prime Minister at Pretoria, and thought he looked much better in health and a better colour; but his leg was somewhat swollen and painful and prevented him from getting much out of door exercise.

When on my return from Bechuanaland a few weeks later, Botha came in from his farm at Standerton to see me, I noted that "he looked seriously unwell and was worried and depressed about himself and things generally, and his general condition perturbed me much. He hinted that he might not be able to go on, as unless he improved he did not think he would be able to face another Session."

He was especially worried at that time over the Wool question which was causing much discontent; and about an action for libel which he was bringing against a Nationalist Senator who had made grave allegations in reference to his action at the time that War broke out and during the Rebellion; "this,

(he said) was troubling him terribly and prevented him from sleeping." A few days later the case came on and the allegations were unequivocally withdrawn; and this was an immense relief to him. He was also greatly encouraged by a successful S.A.P. Conference which he had attended. Mrs. Botha, whom I saw about the same time, was much pleased with the improvement in his health.

But the Session of 1918, in spite of the assistance and relief whole-heartedly given him by his colleagues, told upon him; and by the end of the Session (August) he had again become very unwell, suffering especially from his throat and heart. Mrs. Botha wrote to me on August 15th: "During his tour through his constituency we had wretchedly cold weather and downpours all the time. Most of his meetings were open air ones, and as the people of the districts came up through cold and storm, he felt he could not disappoint them, and the result was a very bad throat, and a severe cold on the liver. I was very unhappy about him—he was so depressed and his heart quite out of order. But we have kept him out of his office, and he is taking a thorough rest."

At the end of the month, "Botha told me that he had not been feeling at all well. He had felt his heart a good deal lately, and had actually felt quite faint and had to lie down. He was greatly depressed about himself, more so than I have ever seen him before. He went on to say that everything worried him now, and I could see in discussing various questions, though he liked talking and speaking freely about them, that they worried him more than usual."¹

¹ Letter to Sec. of State, August 30th, 1918.

I persuaded him to give up a visit to the Free State which he was contemplating and to take all the rest he possibly could. But he was not a good patient nor fond of obeying doctor's orders, and it was difficult to induce him to keep quiet or to refuse to see persons or deputations.

A week or two later he was more cheery, and told me that he felt much better. Finally he was persuaded to go down to the Cape about the middle of September to see Dr. Hugh Smith, in whom he had great faith, and whose directions he promised me laughingly "he would faithfully obey."

One disquieting feature of Botha's illness at that time was described in an explanatory letter which I wrote to Dr. Hugh Smith. "His illness is to a certain extent as much mental as physical; by which I mean that he is very despondent about himself much more than I have ever seen him before. One bad feature of his illness is this: for some time past he has been obsessed with the idea that he has only about a year to live. His father died at the age which he himself will reach within a year, his elder surviving brother died a month or two ago at their father's age, and the symptoms were much the same in both cases as his own. He is therefore firmly convinced that he is destined for the same fate and at the same age. This militates, of course, against his recovery, and also makes him less careful about following out doctor's directions." ¹

The General stayed at Cape Town for some weeks with his friends Sir David and Lady Graaff at their beautiful and health-giving place 'De Grendel' just outside Cape Town, and rested as far as pos-

¹ That which he had anticipated actually happened. Louis died just a year after his brother.

sible. He wrote to me in good spirits, said he was obeying doctor's orders, that his health was improving, and (which cheered me most) that he believed that he was going to get well.

A suggestion was made that a sea voyage would do him good, and Admiral Fitzherbert was prepared to take him for a trip on his Flag ship. Then came however the Armistice, and an urgent cable from the Imperial Government requesting him as Prime Minister to go over to England at once.

No ship being at once available he came up to Pretoria to arrange his affairs and to visit his farm. "I have seen Botha twice (I wrote to Mr. Long) and thought him immensely improved in health, and quite a different person in body and spirits from what he was a couple of months ago." He had lost weight, but gradually not suddenly, which was satisfactory. He said to my wife, putting his hand to his neck, "I shall have to get new shirts as there is a big gap between my neck and the collar."

He looked forward with immense interest and indeed excitement to his visit to Europe to attend the Peace Conference, his only fear was lest he should be killed by kindness. The voyage to England did him a world of good, and he arrived in England in high spirits and greatly improved in health. But while he was in England, and still more when he went to Paris, the strain and confinement of the Peace Conference again told on his health in various ways.

General Botha returned to South Africa at the end of July 1919 having been away about eight months.

On his arrival home he had a wonderful re-

ception first at Cape Town and then at Pretoria. The enthusiasm of the gatherings excited and gratified him immensely, and his reception at a Conference of his Party, and the affection and loyalty shown to him, greatly pleased him. But one of my daughters wrote to me, "the General does not look at all well and his face is quite grey"; and all these manifold functions involved speeches and undue and additional strain, while an immense accumulation of arrears of all sorts had to be tackled.

After the S.A.P. Conference he went to his farm for a rest. He was taken ill there with influenza and was removed to Pretoria. At first there seemed to be no cause for alarm, and I received a reassuring telegram on the 26th and again on the 27th August. But he got rapidly worse; his throat was seriously affected, heart failure and collapse intervened and General Botha died unexpectedly at midnight of August 27th to 28th.

Unfortunately for myself, at the time of General Botha's return I was paying an important visit to Southern Rhodesia, where the negotiations which ultimately led to the grant of Responsible Government to that Territory were just beginning. I had arranged to return in time for the Special Session which had been fixed to take place on September 5th, in order that the Union Parliament should authorise the ratification of the Peace Treaty.

I did not, therefore, see the General on his arrival nor before his death, though I had a good deal of correspondence with him in regard to various questions which had arisen; and, to my grief, owing to the distance, it was not possible for me to get back from Rhodesia in time to attend the funeral.

PART II

RETROSPECT

I

BOTHA was taken away at an age when in ordinary human probability he had many more years of public service before him. He died in harness and in the full possession of his faculties, a victim to his sense of duty.

For twelve years he had been Prime Minister—three years as Prime Minister of the Transvaal, and nine as Prime Minister of the Union, and, throughout that period, he was never free from heavy responsibility—during the War almost overwhelming—accompanied by perpetual worry and anxiety.

The three years during which he was Prime Minister of the Transvaal were no bed of roses. The first four years of Union before the War were replete with incident and anxiety—political, administrative, economic, and industrial.

It was in itself no easy matter to bring the Act of Union into working operation. In a speech he made in August 1915, General Botha referred to this matter. "I make bold to say that in South Africa, at any rate, no Government," and he might have added no Government of any Dominion, "had ever taken up the reins in more difficult conditions than my colleagues and I did. To amalgamate four separate Administrations and to bring into

effect the new Constitution was a great task. Provincial feelings became stronger on any proposal touching any Province, and no one not having taken part in this work could realise how tremendously difficult the task was, because it was only natural that the inhabitants of each separate Province should be attached to their own interests."

Apart from this great task, the Prime Minister and his Government were confronted by grave events, the Johannesburg strike of July 1913, and the subsequent general strike of January 1914; critical questions connected with the Indian Community, and by many other problems of moment and complexity. Twice Botha was faced by a serious Cabinet crisis; and the division which took place amongst his own people in 1912-13, was above all to him a constant source of pain and grief.

The War brought added anxieties, responsibilities and disappointments—"no sooner (he said) is South Africa out of one trouble, than she is plunged into another. The road is nothing but drifts and spruits."

II

The strain of the Great War and its after effects put to a supreme test the stability of the Government and the fidelity of the people, yet the Government of the Union proved more stable than any other Cabinet in any other part of the Empire or indeed of the World-in-Arms.

Abroad,—Thrones, Principalities and Powers went down like ninepins; and among our Monarchical or Republican Allies or Associates a change or reconstruction of the Government was not infrequent. In the United Kingdom itself, there was Coalition and re-Coalition; political reputations were made

or marred, one ancient and powerful Party was for the time being reduced to a remnant. In the other Dominions there was a change more than once in the Premiership, or a Coalition Government was formed.

In the Union alone the Prime Minister and the Cabinet who went into the War, were (with certain minor changes due to death or other causes) the same Prime Minister and Cabinet that emerged, and they remained intact for nearly a year after. Death then removed General Botha himself, but his successor continued his policy with the same Cabinet : and it was not until two years after General Botha's death that any fundamental change was made in the relations of Parties or in the personnel of the Union Government.

III

A wave of deep emotion passed over South Africa, and indeed far beyond her borders, at the news of the sudden, unexpected and untimely death of Louis Botha.

It was realised that a powerful, steadying influence had been suddenly and unexpectedly removed ; that a commanding personality, a remarkable combination of courage, sympathy, constancy, and leadership, was no more ; that a strong and well-tempered link between the Dominion and the Empire had been broken. It is seldom that the passing of a single personality, neither Tyrant nor Conqueror, but Statesman, appeared to mean so much—an epoch was ended and a new era would begin.

The life of Louis Botha—Soldier, Statesman, Leader and Counsellor—forms a remarkable page in history ; a dramatic career that vividly strikes the imagination.

Born in an outlying part of South Africa, he lived his early years as a farmer, and by sheer force of character and ability attained to the foremost place. He was Commandant-General of the Republican Forces during the South African War; over the fateful anxieties and decisions at Vereeniging he exercised a wise and courageous influence; and, later, he took a leading part in the Convention that led to Union. He was the first Prime Minister of the Transvaal, and the first Prime Minister of the Union.

When the Great War began, he and his Government came spontaneously to the support of the Empire in its time of need. When the Rebellion broke out he promptly suppressed it. In German South West, as Commander-in-Chief, after a short and successful campaign, he received the submission of the German Forces, and took over the Territory in the name of the Imperial Government. The provision by the Union of forty to fifty thousand men, both Burgher and British, made possible an effective campaign against German East. A Brigade was sent to Europe which covered itself with glory.

Prime Minister of the Union during the four years of war and the first year of unsettled peace, he had brought South Africa safely through her troubles, had raised her to a higher plane of prosperity and influence, and had made her a powerful Dominion, a new Nation.

IV

South Africa, with its small white population, even to-day not exceeding a million and a half, scattered over an enormous area, has, in a comparatively short space of time, produced by birth,

or has attracted to its midst as their adopted country, a remarkable number of remarkable men. To take only comparatively recent years, and to mention only those who are gone, they form a notable list—President Kruger, Cecil Rhodes, Jan Hofmeyr, President Steyn, Chief Justice de Villiers, Starr Jameson, W. P. Schreiner, de la Rey, Christian de Wet, Piet Joubert, Abraham Fischer, Schalk Burger, Richard Solomon, and last and greatest, Louis Botha.

Botha, like others who have made a great name, was fortunate in his Hour, while South Africa was fortunate in the Man. At critical periods in the life of his Country there came to him great opportunities of which he took full advantage; or rather it may be more truly said that the opportunities were forced upon him, and, being what he was, he could not fail to rise to the occasion.

A General of Huguenot-Dutch descent he commanded the Forces of his Republic against the armies of the British Empire. Five years after peace was signed the self-same General became the first Prime Minister of the Country for which he had fought, but which had now become one of four British Colonies enjoying Responsible Government. Three years later he had become the first Prime Minister of a Dominion of the Empire which united in one Union these four Colonies. Within ten years of the Peace of Vereeniging he himself, as a British General, took the field against the German enemy with a force composed of men of both British and Dutch extraction. After the Armistice was concluded, he attended the Peace Conference of the Allies as a Plenipotentiary, and signed the Peace Treaty on behalf of South Africa. He returned to

his country which he loved so passionately bearing his sheaves with him, and was suddenly struck down in the plenitude of his powers.

Wordsworth's lines seem perfectly to describe the character, statesmanship, and career of Louis Botha :

“ Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means ; and there will stand
On honourable terms, or else retire.

. . .

“ And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw ;
Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need.

. . .

“ Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim.”

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

BOTHA AND GERMAN SHIP

A CURIOUS little personal incident occurred just before the outbreak of the War which is worth recording. General Botha with Mrs. Botha, paid a visit to Rhodesia at the end of July 1914, and had arranged to come back from Northern Rhodesia via Delagoa Bay and had taken their passages on a German ship due to sail from Beira on August 3rd.

It so happened that Sir David Graaff (subsequently the High Commissioner in London) on the afternoon of August 2nd met Mr. Churchill. The latter informed him in the strictest confidence that there was very grave danger of immediate war with Germany. Sir David thereupon sent to Pretoria a warning cable to the Prime Minister. It was opened there, and was at once repeated to Rhodesia, as it confirmed the tentative official communications already received. General Botha thereupon at the last moment cancelled his passage and came back to Pretoria over land. But for this change of plan he would have been on board a German ship at the outbreak of War, and would have been carried away to German East Africa, for the German ship returned to Dar-es-Salaam. A sinister meaning would undoubtedly have been attributed to the incident; and, in any case, General Botha's absence from the Union at the moment might very easily have altered the whole course of events in South Africa after war broke out.

APPENDIX II

UNION CABINETS

(a)

THE FIRST UNION CABINET (June 1914)

PRIME MINISTER AND MINIS-

TER FOR AGRICULTURE	General Botha
FINANCE	Hon. H. C. Hull ¹
INTERIOR, MINES, AND DE-	
FENCE	General Smuts
RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS	Hon. J. W. Sauer
JUSTICE	General Hertzog
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES	Rt. Hon. Sir F. Moor ¹
EDUCATION	Hon. F. S. Malan
LANDS	Rt. Hon. A. Fischer
PUBLIC WORKS AND POSTS	Hon. Sir David Graaff
NATIVE AFFAIRS	Hon. H. Burton ¹
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO	Hon. Dr. O'Grady Gubbins ¹

Sir F. Moor was defeated at the General Election and was succeeded by Mr. (Sir George) Leuchars.

Mr. Merriman was asked, but declined to join the Ministry.

(b)

BOTHA'S CABINET AT OUTBREAK OF WAR (August 1914)

CAPE	Malan, Burton, ¹ H. Van Heerden, Senator Jacobus Graaff.
TRANSVAAL	Botha, Smuts, N. de Wet.
NATAL	Sir Thomas Watt. ¹
O.F.S.	H. S. Theron.

¹ Of British descent.

(c)

BOTHAS' CABINET AT TIME OF HIS DEATH (August 1919)

CAPE . . .	Malan, Burton ¹ (sitting for a Natal seat), Van Heerden, Senator Sir Jacobus Graaff.
TRANSVAAL . .	Botha, Smuts, de Wet, Colonel Mentz.
NATAL . . .	Watt, ¹ T. Orr. ¹
O.F.S. . . .	—

In the interval Mr. Theron had lost his seat at the October 1915 General Election; and after the election there was no S.A.P. Member sitting for an Orange Free State seat.

Sir David Graaff joined the Cabinet as Minister of Finance in 1915 and subsequently resigned owing to ill health. Sir Meiring Beck joined the Cabinet in 1916 and died in May 1919.

(d)

SMUTS' FIRST CABINET (September 1919)

CAPE . . .	Malan, Burton ¹ (sitting for Natal seat), Van Heerden, Senator Graaff.
TRANSVAAL . .	Smuts, de Wet, Mentz.
NATAL . . .	Watt, ¹ T. Orr. ¹
O.F.S. . . .	—

(e)

SMUTS' CABINET AFTER FUSION OF S.A.P.
AND UNIONIST PARTY IN 1921

CAPE . . .	Malan, Burton ¹ (sitting for Natal seat), Sir Thomas Smartt, ¹ J. W. Jagger. ¹
TRANSVAAL . .	Smuts, Senator de Wet, Mentz, P. Duncan. ¹
NATAL . . .	Watt, ¹ Denys Reitz (really O.F.S.).
O.F.S. . . .	—

Messrs. Van Heerden and Orr lost their seats at Election of 1920 and resigned.

¹ Of British descent.

APPENDIX III

UNION PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

STATE OF PARTIES

(a) GENERAL ELECTION OCTOBER 1910

South African Party	66
Unionists	41
Labour	4
Ind. (mostly Botharites)	10
	<hr/>
	121
	<hr/>

(b) POSITION OF PARTIES BEFORE ELECTION OF OCTOBER 1915 (INCLUDES FOR THE FIRST TIME THE NATIONALIST PARTY.)

S.A.P.	65
U.	34
Nat.	8
Lab.	8
Ind.	6
	<hr/>
	121
	<hr/>

Including three vacancies, S.A.P., U., and N. one each.

(c) GENERAL ELECTION OF OCTOBER 1915.

S.A.P.	59
U.	40
Nat.	27
Lab.	3
Ind.	1
	<hr/>
	130
	<hr/>

(d) POSITION OF PARTIES BEFORE ELECTION OF MARCH 1920.

S.A.P.	.	.	.	.	.	58
U.	.	.	.	.	.	38
Nat.	.	.	.	.	.	28
Lab.	.	.	.	.	.	5
Ind.	.	.	.	.	.	1
						<hr/>
						130
						<hr/>

(e) GENERAL ELECTION MARCH 1920.

S.A.P.	.	.	.	.	.	43
U.	.	.	.	.	.	25
Nat.	.	.	.	.	.	45
Lab.	.	.	.	.	.	21
						<hr/>
						134
						<hr/>

The above figures have been kindly supplied to me by a competent Authority.

APPENDIX IV

POPULATION OF UNION

(a)

TERRITORY OF UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

WHITE POPULATION

1904	1911	1918	1921
1,132,000	1,276,000	1,450,000	1,519,000

1921—Males, 782,000 ; Females, 737,000.

1921—NATIVES . . .	4,700,000 ¹
ASIATIC . . .	166,000
COLOURED . . .	546,000

(b)

BORN IN UNION

—	Total Europeans in Union.	Total born in Union ²	Percentage
1904 . .	1,132,000	838,000	74·0
1911 . .	1,276,000	1,018,000	79·76
1921 . .	1,519,000	1,281,000	84·30

¹ Defined in Census as " Aboriginal Tribes of the Bantu race " ; Hottentots, Bushmen, etc. are included under " Coloured," but they are not numerous.

² Includes 4,500 persons born in other parts of South Africa.

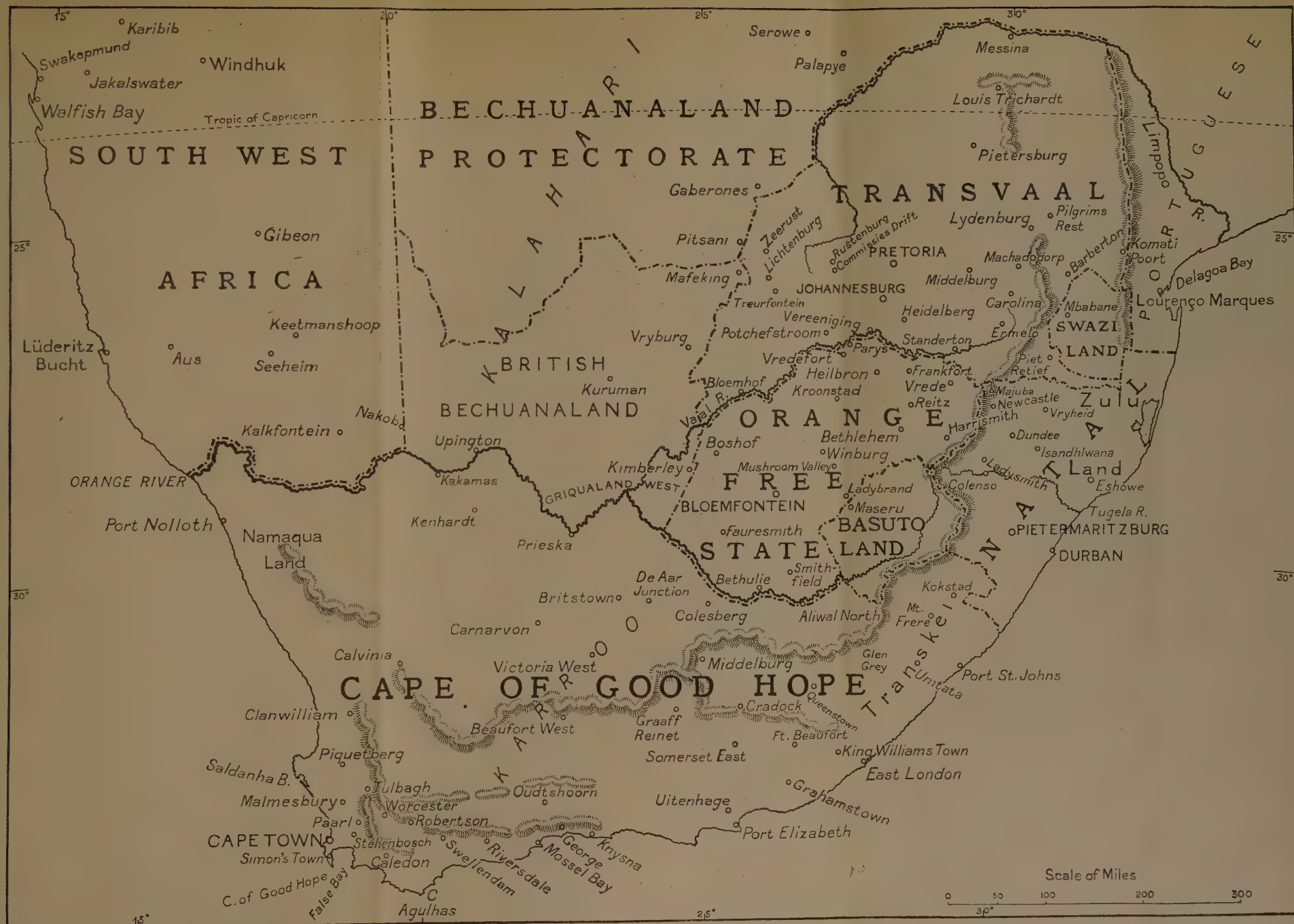
NOT BORN IN UNION

—			Born in British Possessions.	Born in Foreign Countries.	Total
1911	.	.	198,000	59,000	257,000
1921	.	.	181,000	56,500	237,500

Thus of the 15·7 of those living in the Union in 1921 but born outside the Union, 12·0 per cent. had come from Great Britain or British Possessions and only 3·7 from Foreign Countries.

BORN IN HOLLAND

1911	.	.	.	.	5,300
1921	.	.	.	.	5,304



SKETCH MAP (RAILWAYS OMITTED FOR CLEARNESS) OF SOUTH AFRICA, SHOWING THE FOUR PROVINCES OF THE UNION AND THE THREE PROTECTORATES, 1924.

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